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Thursday, 23 September 2004, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Ping .... (Gabon)

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Address by Mr. Henrique Pereira Rosa, President of the Republic of Guinea-Bissau

The President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Guinea-Bissau.

Mr. Henrique Pereira Rosa, President of the Republic of Guinea-Bissau, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Henrique Pereira Rosa, President of the Republic of Guinea-Bissau, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Pereira Rosa (*spoke in Portuguese; interpretation from French text provided by the delegation*): Thirty years ago, my country attained its national sovereignty. Indeed, it was on 17 September 1974 that the young Republic of Guinea-Bissau was admitted to the United Nations as a full-fledged Member State. Three decades, to be sure, is a short time in terms of nation-building. But it is a long time if you consider that in most African countries, including my own, life expectancy does not exceed 50 years. That bitter reality is the true measure of the time that has elapsed and of what my country has achieved since independence. Hence, for us in Guinea-Bissau, this is an important time for reflection, indeed for introspection, in the light of recent events and of the successive crises we have confronted of late.

I address the Assembly today as the transitional President of the Republic of Guinea-Bissau. Addressing the Assembly gives me particular pleasure, Sir, because you — Mr. Jean Ping, the outstanding Minister of State and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the brotherly and friendly Gabonese Republic — are presiding over the Assembly's work with the skill, experience and talent we all know so well.

We have come to New York in search of new ideas for innovative and resolute action, ideas that will affect the way we think and will have a positive impact on our joint efforts to create a new world of peace, freedom and social justice for all countries and peoples represented here.

It was with great attention and interest that we listened to the outstanding statement made here two days ago by Secretary-General Kofi Annan (see A/59/PV.3). His observations were thought-provoking. For our part, we share his vision of the world as it is today and as it should be tomorrow. Above all, we appreciate his dedication and determination at the head of the Organization, whose irreplaceable role is increasingly evident throughout the world.

We live today in a world of ever more striking contrasts, imbalances, contradictions and inequalities. On the one hand, we are witness to increasingly marvellous scientific and technological progress, from which certain countries benefit greatly. On the other

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hand, hundreds of millions of people continue to live precarious lives and to suffer from malnutrition and endemic disease. This situation is not only inhuman and immoral, it is dangerous. It is sowing all the seeds that provoke frustration and despair, fuel rancour and hatred and lead to irrational behaviour and to actions endangering peace and international security.

Combating poverty and epidemics such as HIV/AIDS throughout the world does not mean kindness or charity; it is common sense that requires that together we mobilize our actions to combat those scourges. I am gratified by the initiative of certain heads of State — in particular, President Lula da Silva — in recalling to each of us our responsibilities in the fight to eradicate hunger and destitution in a world as interdependent as the one in which we live today. It is critical here to understand that there is an urgent need to act, and to act properly. Above all, let us not wait for more reports or analyses to be submitted to us first, regardless of how visionary or relevant they may be. Thousands of women, children and infants die every day because they lack a pill or a vaccination. That is unjust; that is immoral.

We must pool our efforts to establish more equitable relations among States. International trade must be better regulated, just as globalization and its effects on the world economy must be better controlled, to allow for a more equitable distribution of the riches of the world. Rather than leaving the underdeveloped countries to suffer from the effects of globalization, let us create for them the conditions necessary for their integration into the process, which is utterly beyond their control and whose social dimension must be the subject of specific measures so as to mitigate negative consequences.

Today it is clear to everyone that to ensure peace throughout the world there is a need to promote the development of the poorest countries and to improve the living conditions of populations, in particular by guaranteeing them access to drinking water, health and education — especially for girls. Above all there is a need to create a social and political environment that is stable and is likely to release that creative energy of each and every individual and to promote the participation of all citizens in the management of the affairs of State of their country.

The rights of each and every person must be respected, and all liberties provided by the law must be guaranteed without any impediment. The rule of law must be consolidated to allow each institution to function properly and effectively. I am thinking in particular of justice, which must be able to act with full independence and with scrupulous respect for the separation of executive, legislative and judicial powers.

Guinea-Bissau, unfortunately, has not escaped from the cycle of violence and political crisis that seems today to have become a prerogative of the African countries. Our country has recently suffered from the disastrous consequences of an economic policy that is poorly adapted to the real needs of the population. The domestic conflict we have been experiencing in Guinea-Bissau since 1998 could have been avoided. It has further impoverished a country that is among the least developed countries and where everything must still be built because nothing could resist destruction. We are aware of the seriousness of the situation and of the need to pool our efforts to make the necessary changes, which our people have a right to expect from their leaders.

Our people have suffered too much and for too long and have made too many sacrifices. We must create new conditions that provide reasons for hope. We have successfully initiated national dialogue based on mutual respect and taking into account the national interest. We have created a new culture of peace based on our affiliation with one single country with all its diversity and social and cultural riches. We have decided to make democracy an immutable reality.

However, we are aware that democracy is not easy to build in a poor country where the illiteracy rate is still high and where the fundamental infrastructure is still severely lacking. Nevertheless, we continue to be inspired by the courage of our people and by the support of other countries — those of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Union Économique et Monétaire Ouest-africaine (UEMOA) and the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries in particular — and the European Union, China and the rest of the international community. Thus last March we were able to organize legislative elections that the international community considered just and credible and to establish a new parliament, the role of which is fundamental in any democracy. We will also be organizing presidential elections in April 2005, as agreed in the Charter of Transition, thus allowing for the restoration of constitutional order.

Guinea-Bissau needs the assistance of the international community to meet the many enormous challenges confronting it. That assistance is urgent and important. We have created mechanisms for the rigorous control of State revenues and expenditures and, with the assistance of the UNDP and the Bretton Woods institutions in particular, all the necessary conditions for the transparent management of public property, which allows us to combat corruption.

To enable us to relaunch our economy rapidly, we are planning to hold a round table in December. We hope that India, Brazil and South Africa will be assisting us in that initiative to combat poverty and helping us in the organization we have created in our country.

We have here a great opportunity to express our gratitude for the commitment and dynamic action of the Economic and Social Council's Ad Hoc Advisory Group on Guinea-Bissau and its partners, an indispensable instrument for advancing constructive dialogue between Guinea-Bissau and its partners for development, including the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. I should like to thank them from this rostrum for their continued support. So, too, we wish to reaffirm our great appreciation for the members of the Security Council who visited our country last June and showed their great interest in it.

For the maintenance of international peace and security Guinea-Bissau, speaking before the great majority of the Members of the Organization, hopes that the Security Council's part will be strengthened by enhancing its membership to better reflect the world situation. From this rostrum, I would like to say how grateful we are to those who supported us in the first phase of our transition.

Humanity is one and indivisible. The men and women who inhabit our planet share the same aspirations: peace and well-being. Every individual, whatever the continent he belongs to, feels the same frustration when confronting injustice, impunity and violations of the rights of the human being. There is not a single child who does not feel the need to be loved and protected by his or her parents and who does not hope to grow up in a home where peace and love reign. How can we protect them if nothing is done to guarantee the rights of women and give a suitable education to young women? How can we prevent the mother, and the child she brings into the world, becoming victims of an endemic illness such as AIDS, tuberculosis or malaria at a time when most poor countries are incapable of providing basic health care?

Tomorrow's world is being built today. Thanks to the awareness of the real challenges, in this planetary village in which we all live, with its advantages and its problems, our human condition must be the common denominator on which and around which all people of good will should come together in order to make our world more fair, more tolerant and based more on solidarity.

Whether we are discussing crises in Africa or in the Middle East, or the fight against terrorism — a fight that requires us all to mobilize our efforts — we must be animated by the same determination to seek lasting solutions based on consensus.

The peoples we represent expect us to take concrete actions. They hope that we will be able to overcome our differences and pool our efforts so as to respond to their most urgent needs. Many praiseworthy initiatives to eradicate hunger, poverty, malnutrition and illiteracy have been undertaken. We must involve non-governmental organizations and other elements of civil society. In other words, we must appeal to all people of goodwill.

The nations of the world all share the planet Earth, on which we all live. It is our responsibility to protect it so that we can provide our children and our children's children with the conditions for a healthy life lived in dignity.

Environmental protection alone is not enough. We must also create a climate of peace throughout the world. That cannot be done without the help of each Member State: it must be a collective effort in which dialogue and agreement take precedence and where the rule of law prevails in international relations. None of our peoples can live in isolation in the self-reliant manner of the past. The interdependence of the global economy is now a reality for all of us. Let us take advantage of the resources of the Earth without abusing our ecosystems, because the future of the planet depends on our capacity to think in terms of the collective interest. Let us act in a spirit of humanism and solidarity whenever the poorest of the poor confront calamity and natural disasters — disasters such as those that have recently afflicted Haiti, the Dominican Republic and other Caribbean countries.

Let us understand the true dimension and meaning of the spiritual force that resides in each human being — a force to which we can turn at times of doubt and discouragement in order to regain the will and the energy we need to overcome our challenges.

The President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Guinea-Bissau for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Henrique Pereira Rosa, President of the Republic of Guinea-Bissau, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Al Hadji Yahya A. J. J. Jammeh, President of the Republic of the Gambia

The President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of the Gambia.

Al Hadji Yahya A. J. J. Jammeh, President of the Republic of the Gambia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Al Hadji Yahya A. J. J. Jammeh, President of the Republic of the Gambia, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Jammeh: I should like, Sir, to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session. This session might well prove to be epoch-making in that this body will be called upon to consider and to make far-reaching decisions on what ought to be done to revitalize our Organization and to better align it to fit today's imperatives for global security, peace and development. I have no doubt that you will live up to our expectations and that, given your wisdom and vast experience, you will guide our deliberations to a successful outcome. You may rest assured, Mr. President, that you will receive my delegation's fullest cooperation.

I would also like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to your predecessor, the very energetic and dynamic outgoing President, Mr. Julian E. Hunte, who conducted the business of the fifty-eighth session with gusto, dedication and courage, and who helped us to address some difficult issues. My delegation wishes him all the very best in his future endeavours.

To our Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, I express my deep appreciation for yet another year of dedicated service to the Organization — indeed, to humanity at large. Some of the problems that were laid before him were not easy to resolve but, as expected, resolved they were. I hope that his efforts to ensure the triumph of multilateralism, the resolution of disputes and the pursuit of meaningful cooperation among nations will be further bolstered during the session that is just beginning.

I stand here representing the young people of the world. My statement is very long, and is divided into two parts: one part will be circulated to representatives; I will read out the other part.

World leaders have stood at this rostrum on many occasions, addressing the world. We made pledges to the children of the world during the twenty-seventh special session — the children's summit — in 2002. During that special session, we pledged to create a better world and an environment conducive to the wellbeing of the children of the world. We have also come up with objectives for global development so as to make the world a better place for humanity by 2015. So far, there is no indication that those objectives will be achieved in the next 2,000 years.

What are the problems? Since the children's summit took place, we have seen the condition of the world's children become more and more desperate. Children are being butchered throughout the world. Children's rights are being violated. Children are being sold into slavery, and they are being terrorized by adults — we, who are supposed to take care of them.

We have seen the economies of small States collapse as a result of rising oil prices. I come from a volatile part of the world, but I do not represent only Africa; I represent the young people of the world, whose future is very bleak if the status quo is not addressed.

What are the problems of humanity today? They are man-made problems, and, because they are man-made, we will be able to resolve them. The solution to those problems lies with us, human beings — irrespective of race, colour, creed or religion.

The problem of development can best be summarized thus: as long as there is violence and as long as there is no peace or global security, we, the poorer parts of humanity, will always become poorer and poorer, while the richer nations will become richer and richer.

There cannot be any development without peace and stability. There cannot be peace or stability without democracy, justice and equality. The main problem of humanity today — which is creating all our other problems — is a result of four human tendencies: greed, double standards, intolerance and hypocrisy.

None of us here can look into the faces of our children and assure them of a bright future or of their safety. Because of greed, human life has been reduced to naught. People want to become rich at the expense of human life. Greed can come in many forms. The insatiable appetite for world domination and intolerance — those are things that face humanity today.

Our problem is not a confrontation between Islam and other religions. The problem of terrorism is a human characteristic. No good Muslim would ever commit a terrorist act. But, because the world has become so bad, lawlessness is rampant, and those who want to take out their frustrations on other human beings can do so in the name of Islam or any other religion.

I have listened to my colleagues who have spoken here. But, as long as certain issues are not addressed, there will be no peace, and the war against terror will become an elusive fight that we will always lose.

Some of us believe that, because we disapproved of the war in Iraq in the beginning, it is not our business to help solve it now. But let me assure the Assembly that the war in Iraq has more far-reaching consequences for humanity — and particularly for the children whom we pledged to support at the World Summit for Children — than for anything else. We have seen our economies collapse because of high oil prices that rise higher every day. It is our collective responsibility to put an end to the war in Iraq. We have seen the rise of global terrorism; the world is a more dangerous place today than during the cold war. The war in Iraq — regardless of whether or not we supported it — is a human tragedy, and it is not in our interests, as the human race, to let that war continue because we disapprove of what has happened. Two wrongs cannot make a right. Even if we believe that the war was wrong, it is the responsibility of the entire human race to help put an end to the suffering of the Iraqi people. We have seen children being butchered in Beslan, Russia; we have seen Palestinian and Israeli children being butchered. The problem is not a religious problem but a political one, because we, the leaders of the world, want to teach others a lesson by making them suffer. That is a human tragedy.

We cannot be diplomats here if we want to solve the world's problems. It is amazing that, when certain actions that are described as terrorist acts are carried out by other parties, they are described as retaliation for something. An unlawful act that destroys human life is a terrorist act, regardless of its objective or the rationale behind it.

If poverty is not addressed, there will be desperation and hunger. And, if human beings are desperate, they can resort to actions that are horrific to the rest of us. We have seen that some parts of the world are very rich and that other parts — including Africa, where I come from — are becoming poorer and poorer. If the world's wealth is not distributed equally, there will be imbalances and inequities, and there will be people who are desperate. If people are desperate, they will do anything to survive.

However, that does not mean that one can justify violence. I do not justify violence in any form, because I believe that peace and stability would augur well for our children. The fight against terror is global. Let us be mindful of the consequences of allowing terror to be seen as a legitimate act.

We have seen double standards being applied when resolutions are adopted for the good of humanity by the international community — which is represented here — and, in some cases, are enforced to the letter, whereas a few States are above international law and United Nations resolutions.

That brings me to the issue of nuclear weapons. As a human being and as a peacemaker, I believe that, following the end of the cold war, no nation should have been able to justify the possession of nuclear weapons, much less become a new nuclear Power. If powerful nations continue to keep their nuclear weapons — and there are many double standards in the way we deal with one another — that will only become an enticement for others to opt for nuclear weapons because they think such weapons will serve as an insurance policy against attacks.

I know that, during the 1980s, there was a campaign to promote nuclear disarmament. Today, in the new millennium, that campaign should be strengthened through a United Nations resolution making it illegal for anyone to possess nuclear weapons. We have seen conflicts simmering that will have drastic consequences for humanity — conflicts aimed at preventing certain States from acquiring nuclear weapons. Now that the Soviet empire no longer exists, all nuclear weapons — whether they are possessed by the Gambia or by any other country — should be eliminated. Just imagine one bomb killing millions of people. And here we stand, telling everyone that the world will be a better place for mankind. I believe in the peaceful resolution of all conflicts. Indeed, as far as I know, there is no licensing authority for the possession of nuclear weapons; therefore, no one can decide who should and who should not have them.

We should take a bold step to ensure that no one has nuclear weapons. In this forum, on behalf of the world's children, I appeal to those who aspire to possess nuclear weapons that that is the wrong path to take. Peace and stability cannot be ensured through the possession of nuclear weapons. The strength of a nation is not based on its firepower or its nuclear arsenal, but is determined by its ability to make the world a better place for humanity, including its own citizens. Nuclear weapons are not a solution.

The President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of the Gambia for the statement he has just made.

> *Al Hadji Yahya A. J. J. Jammeh, President of the Republic of the Gambia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.*

Address by Mr. Ricardo Maduro Joest, President of the Republic of Honduras

The President (spoke in French): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Honduras.

> *Mr. Ricardo Maduro Joest, President of the Republic of Honduras, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.*

The President (spoke in French): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Ricardo Maduro Joest, President of the Republic of Honduras, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Maduro Joest (spoke in Spanish): For the second time, I have this special opportunity of appearing before you in the common home of the nations of the world. Everyone knows that we live in a time of great risks and problems, but also of great opportunities. Allow me to refer to two challenges, which in my opinion are the most important: the lack of security and the existence of poverty.

First of all, I must refer to the lack of security. I believe that it is obvious to everyone that the durability of our democratic system and the alleviation of poverty require us to provide for the security of each one of our citizens. My Government is committed to that. The safety of my compatriots is my first priority. I am committed to ensuring respect for human rights and, within that concept, I am even more committed to ensuring the protection and the security of honest and hard-working citizens. If we all strive to provide security and reduce our citizens' level of poverty, we will also be combating terrorists, and we will be winning the battle against those who take advantage of the positive qualities of democracy to destroy it through terror.

Combating terrorism begins by combating crime and delinquency in our countries. We are committed to this struggle, and we know that we are not alone. This is, in fact, a universal challenge. We know that we can only confront it if we are together. Crime, delinquency and terrorism have, in effect, already undergone globalization and our actions, therefore, must be equally based on international cooperation.

Organized crime appears in many shapes and forms. However, few are as degrading as drug trafficking. Few crimes generate as much corruption or so thoroughly destroy the core of our society and our values than drug trafficking. My country is on the drug trafficking route. We are right in the middle of the corridor that links the producers to the consumers. We are victims of the greed of the producers and the perverted desires of the consumers. Over the past 18 months in Honduras, we have impounded more drugs than in all the previous nine years, but this is obviously still not enough. Combating organized crime and drug trafficking, if we are alone, will be almost impossible. The Governments of the countries in which drugs are produced, the countries that are used to transport the drugs and the countries in which the drugs are consumed must, together, confront this. If we are alone, the poor countries have very few chances of succeeding. If we remain alone, we will have to divert resources that we need to combat poverty towards combating drug trafficking and organized crime. We need more resolute, direct and substantial support if we are to confront this tremendous challenge. I would like to say to the wealthy countries: let us work together to confront this scourge of our time.

Security also implies the rule of law and, for over three years, we have worked to bring it about. We have combated corruption by closing businesses that engaged in tax evasion, eliminated the immunity of public servants and promoted a responsible use of State resources. We have achieved a great deal, but we recognize that a great deal remains to be done. We recently adopted a property law, which, for the first time in our history, enables the poor to hold deeds to their land. This may seem simple and almost trivial in developed countries, but on our continent, by and large, the poor have not enjoyed the benefit of these valuable deeds. Eighty-four per cent of Honduras' citizens do not have a title to the plot of land on which they live. We are opening new pathways, and before my Government completes its mandate, we hope that hundreds of thousands of poor people will hold, for the first time, registered titles to their property.

Security also implies peaceful relationships with our neighbours. For the first time in our history, our land borders have been defined, and they are now being conclusively demarcated. What is even more important is that this was achieved without spilling blood and without bellicose threats. We resorted to the International Court of Justice in The Hague and we have complied with its rulings. As far as Honduras is concerned, solving a border dispute is not something that can be achieved through violence. It can be achieved peacefully, through international jurisprudence.

Having now consolidated our land borders, we are defining our maritime borders, and we have once again had recourse to the International Court of Justice.

In our opinion, the time has now come to take the next step. The time has come to declare Central America a zone of peace, a zone that renounces violence as a means of resolving disputes. To consolidate this process with the support of the Organization of American States, we have already eliminated all the landmines that were placed around our country years ago, and we can now say with pride that we are a country that is entirely free of landmines. To bring this process to completion, we now propose reducing the number of weapons of war throughout the region. To lend credibility to this process, we invite the United Nations to accompany us and to certify compliance on the part of each of our countries. We also invite the international community to join us in this process.

We propose that the process of arms reduction be supported with fresh resources to combat poverty. We propose an exchange: weapons of war in exchange for funding for poverty alleviation. Please support us. Poverty, and even more, hunger and malnutrition, are the most fearsome enemies of our democratic systems. A democracy based on empty stomachs is an empty democracy. All the research that has been carried out, including studies by the United Nations, tell us that, today as never before, formal democracy prevails throughout our continent, in Latin America. However, the same studies tell us that, today more than ever, dissatisfaction with our democratic systems is rampant. Poverty undermines our democracies and hunger erodes them. We know that combating poverty and hunger is an effort that must be shared by all. In our case, in Honduras, with much participation on the part of our citizens, we have devised a strategy to combat poverty that incorporates the Millennium Development Goals. This legacy has been refined and perfected over the past two years. The strategy to combat poverty is the very foundation of our vision as a country and of our planning as a nation.

However, alone and in isolation, our efforts undoubtedly will not be able to produce the hoped-for results for our people. We require the support of the international community. International cooperation is not a handout; it is an investment. Everyone, absolutely everyone, derives benefit from it. Our small economies are open to international trade and to globalization. We do not fear this challenge; in fact, we see that it provides tremendous opportunities to us.

However, we will not be able to overcome our poverty if the rules of international trade are not fair. We firmly believe that protected markets lead only to stagnation and the growth of poverty. It is not fair that while we are opening our markets, other countries are giving subsidies to their producers.

We welcome the decision of the United States to return to the International Coffee Organization, but at the same time we ask that the hundreds of thousands of families that grow coffee in rural areas be paid better. Let me give you an example. Five years ago, our farmers earned 40 per cent of the price of coffee served to the final consumer. Today, they earn only 9 per cent, while the companies in developed countries pocket the difference. I invite the presidents and heads of State of coffee-producing countries to work together until we achieve a better price for all of our farmers. Together, producers and consumers, we can make sure that coffee is not a bitter drink for the producers.

If the price of coffee can have a rapid and massive impact on the struggle against poverty, the price of oil, when it rises, rapidly makes our poverty much worse. In the case of my country, over the past year the increased bill for oil is 12 times what we spend on providing school lunches to 870,000 boys and girls who used to go to school without eating every day. This is 12 times what it took us years and many sacrifices to achieve. The world has seldom seen so massive a transfer of resources from poor importing countries to wealthy oil-exporting countries.

I would like to take this opportunity to appeal to international conscience, and in particular to the conscience of oil-exporting countries, that we may establish a trading system that brings about a reduction in the price of oil and helps to stabilize it. We need a system that takes account of poverty in countries and of the efforts that are being made to combat it. We need a system that enjoys United Nations supervision to ensure that it is used properly.

I am making a formal request to the United Nations to take the lead in this matter. I am not exaggerating when I say that there are few other actions we could take that would make such a great contribution to reducing poverty. I would also like to appeal to the developed countries to use oil like a scarce resource. Let them continue to improve fuel efficiency and to establish taxes that reflect the true cost of oil. Let them coordinate measures to make sure that demand does not grow unduly and make prices grow too fast. They should make prudent use of a non-renewable resource to which we should all have access.

I would like to conclude by appealing to all to strengthen the United Nations system. That is the only way we can achieve peace in the world. Let us subordinate our individual agendas in order to find agreed solutions here in the United Nations. The well-being of the world demands that we act in this manner.

I would also add that we support reforming the Security Council by increasing the number of permanent and non-permanent members. This will make it possible for countries such as Japan to participate, as well as a representative for Latin America. This will lend greater legitimacy to the Council's decisions. We also support an all-embracing approach for the United Nations, which, in our opinion, means that we should find a way of enabling the Chinese people in Taiwan to participate in the United Nations processes.

As I said at the beginning, we are living in difficult times, but this is also a time of great opportunity. We hold out our hand in friendship to everyone. All that we ask in exchange is to be treated fairly.

The President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Honduras for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Ricardo Maduro Joest, President of the Republic of Honduras, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Jorge Batlle Ibáñez, President of the Eastern Republic of Uruguay

The President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Eastern Republic of Uruguay.

Mr. Jorge Batlle Ibáñez, President of the Eastern Republic of Uruguay, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Jorge Batlle Ibáñez, the President of the Eastern Republic of Uruguay, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Batlle Ibáñez (*spoke in Spanish*): Today no one denies that globalization is here and that it is here to stay. Not only has it changed the world of communications so that now everything happens at the same time throughout the world, but more importantly, it has made historical borders irrelevant. The young generation has more contact with other young people living thousands of miles away than they have with their own neighbours or family.

It is absolutely true that a global culture is emerging in this world. While this is happening, countries are still living on their nationalisms, their secular habits, their own interests and their parochial projects that are often alien to the new realities. The question that we leaders ask ourselves — especially those of us who represent small nations — is whether this inexorable change can be handled by the organizations that we have created, or whether those organizations still have a long way to go in terms of adapting to the new reality. When we look at the impressive success achieved by the United Nations since San Francisco in 1944, two things seem clear.

First, the institutions that we have created represent the greatest and most successful effort ever made by mankind to organize peaceful coexistence and to endow the planet with the best possible instruments for dealing with the important aspects of human lives within human society.

Secondly, it is equally clear that the world has changed so much that the current reality now far exceeds the capacity of the institutions that were created to address and resolve past issues, issues that today have taken on totally different characteristics. Suffice it to recall that the founding Members of the United Nations numbered 51 and that today there are 191 Member States. More important, the world's population at that time was only half what it is today. And the total is inexorably rising towards 9 billion.

Furthermore, over the past 40 years, scientific advances and the ensuing technological applications have increased the resources of a very small group of nations, leaving far behind many other countries, some of which only recently gained their independence and most of which are rich in natural resources but lack the basic structures needed to achieve sustainable growth — countries, moreover, where, no doubt as a consequence of this, the population is increasing at very high rates and where the resulting emigration to other continents will soon create serious problems of coexistence.

Uruguay has been a Member of the United Nations since its foundation and believes in the Organization and in the varied multilateral agencies that support its efforts; we understand the need to consider Charter revision so that nations that did not then carry the weight they carry today can assume greater obligations in the inescapable tasks that the situation of mankind now imposes on us. It is time for them to share the responsibility with the five nations that assumed it nearly 60 years ago.

Uruguay has also been participating in peacekeeping operations for many years. Uruguay is one of the largest troop contributors, and is the very largest if the ratio of its small population — 3.4 million — to peacekeepers is taken into consideration. We have participated in operations in Asia and in Africa, and we are currently deployed in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Haiti, Eritrea and elsewhere.

Uruguay acknowledges and welcomes the wise European Union effort to bring equality at the highest level to European nations with marked differences in income compared with the richest countries. The examples of Ireland, Portugal, Spain and Greece, which will surely be emulated for new European Union members, indicate what we in the United Nations must do for the Congo and Haiti.

There is no point in achieving peace if the United Nations lacks funds that can immediately be spent for the practical benefit of peoples in extreme economic difficulties. We must create global and largely autonomous financial instruments to achieve those goals. That is the only way for the United Nations to succeed.

A tiny nation like Haiti — of 27,000 square kilometres and 9 million inhabitants, where the average number of children per mother is 4.7 and which lacks the institutional and material infrastructure it needs — cannot and will not resolve its problems merely because a contingent of military forces from countries of the Common Market of the South (MERCOSUR) is keeping the peace.

Travelling in the Congo with the troops we recently dispatched, we see exactly the same thing happening: a nation of 2.2 million square kilometres and a population of 50 million does not have a road going from one end of the country to the other. Without autonomous, ready and independent means of coping with and transforming that state of affairs, the United Nations will not have solved anything at all even five, 10, 15 or 20 years from now. Yet only the United Nations can handle such tasks.

Just more than three years since the fateful day of 11 September 2001 and just over six months since the tragedy in Madrid, new and terrible forms of violence continue assailing other parts of the world, claiming hundreds of innocent victims — as we have recently seen in Russia and as we see in the Middle East. This reveals the destructive power that poses a permanent threat to the world as a whole, a source of inescapable sadness and a cause for despair about the human condition itself.

Terrorism — and a genuine commitment to combat and defeat it — must therefore be the first item on our international agenda. Each State, each nation, each community and each human being must contribute to this endeavour; that is how we can help the United Nations to fulfil its role as universal guarantor.

Combating this and other evils — hunger, poverty, underdevelopment, marginalization, exclusion — requires a United Nations that is more united, nimbler and more effective. That is why the Organization must be more representative, more balanced and more reliable: so that it can continue to be a reference point for the weak and a restraining influence on the strong.

Here, our country has recently adopted legislation strengthening the system of prevention and control of money laundering and the financing of terrorism. We are in compliance with nearly all current treaties in this area, and our legislation improves our mechanisms for international cooperation against money laundering and the financing of terrorism.

At the Millennium Summit and in the Doha Declaration and Monterrey Consensus we agreed on principles, goals and priorities, and we made commitments which we reaffirmed a few days ago at the summit of world leaders for the Action Against Hunger and Poverty. If we are to attain those goals, we need more just and equitable rules of international trade. That is how to ensure that this becomes a key stage in the march towards the social and political stability that is today in serious jeopardy.

This is particularly important since it is well known that States that vociferously preach free trade and demand open markets — which in our case are already entirely open — themselves impose and institute obstacles to trade, subsidize their production in distorting ways and compete with countries such as mine and many others, which have nothing to offer the world except the labour of their people in the commodity and industrial sectors, which further enriches the rich countries.

Uruguay attaches fundamental importance to financial and trade issues. In all international forums, Uruguay calls for freer, more open markets. We favour a single market from Alaska to Tierra del Fuego; we support the Doha Agreement; we support the opening of markets. We believe in freedom, but we believe also that freedom is indivisible: there can be no political freedom without economic freedom, and we think there can be no economic freedom that does not go hand in hand with political freedom.

We believe, therefore, that peoples can be strong only if they can create their future in freedom. We cannot build and stabilize democracies if women and men cannot find an honest job to which to devote their energies. That goal cannot be achieved with economic assistance alone or with loans that, in the poorest countries, are paid back only with great difficulty. It can be brought about only with free trade — something that the world experienced in the nineteenth century.

In conclusion, Uruguay will continue to be committed to the international system and to the progressive development of international law, the most recent expression of which was the establishment of the International Criminal Court, whose Statute we have ratified. We reaffirm our conviction that multilateralism is the main principle on which the conduct of international affairs must be based. We express the hope that our region and the world as a whole will pool their efforts and work together in a realistic and committed manner. We continue to believe in the United Nations as the collective instrument best suited to our search for peace.

The President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Eastern Republic of Uruguay for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Jorge Batlle Ibáñez, President of the Eastern Republic of Uruguay, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Agenda item 9 (*continued*)

General debate

Address by The Right Honourable Pakalitha Bethuel Mosisili, Prime Minister and Minister for Defence and Public Service of the Kingdom of Lesotho

The President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister and Minister for Defence and Public Service of the Kingdom of Lesotho.

The Right Honourable Pakalitha Bethuel Mosisili, Prime Minister and Minister for Defence and Public Service of the Kingdom of Lesotho, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President (*spoke in French*): I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency The Right Honourable Pakalitha Bethuel Mosisili, Prime Minister and Minister for Defence and Public Service of the Kingdom of Lesotho, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Mosisili (Lesotho): I would like, on behalf of my delegation, to join previous speakers in congratulating you, Sir, on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly at this session. At the same time, I would like to extend our compliments to your predecessor, Mr. Julian Hunte, as well as to the Secretary-General, for a job well done.

If there has been one consistent and predictable area of convergence in our debates during General Assembly sessions of the past, as well as during the current session, it is the compelling need for a peaceful and stable world — a world where humankind lives in harmony, mutual tolerance and respect for the collective benefit. For if we have peace and stability at the national, regional and international levels, humankind will be able to concentrate on the real issues of the development of this, our only world.

Never before has our world been so insecure or faced such enormous challenges. Sadly, this insecurity results from man's inhumanity and his insensitivity to human life. Yet it is also through man's efforts that the effects of such challenges can and must be mitigated or — better still — defeated.

It is common knowledge that the root cause of the world's insecurity today is international terrorism and armed conflict. Terrorist actions continue to haunt and to shock us. The recent murder of innocent, young, defenceless school children in Beslan, Russia; the bombings in Indonesia; and daily killings in Iraq, Palestine and Israel, are simply too ghastly to countenance. Equally, the recent massacres of men, women and children in refugee camps in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Burundi and the Sudan are not only dastardly in the extreme, but stand in stark contrast to everything that modern civilization, humanity and morality espouse.

Our world will continue to be insecure for as long as terrorists continue to be harboured and financed by some States Members of the United Nations. We must recognize that none of us is immune from terrorism. But a more honest and practical solution would be for all States Members of the United Nations to commit themselves not to harbour or finance terrorists and their organizations. In that way, terrorists would have no safe haven, thus rendering it possible to chase them from pillar to post until terrorist organizations are eliminated from our world.

We submit that yet another, equally pragmatic, solution may be found in the answer to the question: what is it that drives an inherently good human being to commit such inhuman and senseless acts of State terrorism, organizational terrorism or individual terrorism? In short, we must confront the causes of terrorism, honestly and without malice to anybody.

Lesotho is deeply concerned by the fact that armed conflicts continue to cause suffering and hinder economic growth in Africa and elsewhere. However, we commend the United Nations for all its efforts aimed at the elimination of human suffering in armed conflict situations. When, in July 2003, the Assembly adopted its historic resolution 57/337, on the prevention of armed conflict, it recognized that multilateral cooperation, under the auspices of the United Nations, could be an effective means to prevent armed conflict and to address its root causes. Furthermore, it acknowledged the responsibility of the United Nations to stand up to the challenge of preventing, rather than just responding to, conflict.

I should like to take this opportunity to express my delegation's appreciation to the Secretary-General, for the comprehensive report to be presented at this session on the implementation of that important resolution.

For years now, the situation in Somalia has posed a threat to international peace and security. The swearing-in of Somalia's transitional parliament on 22 August 2004, in Nairobi, Kenya, paves the way for genuine recovery for Somalia. In that regard, my delegation compliments the Government of Kenya, the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development, the African Union and all other stakeholders for their efforts to bring about normalcy in Somalia. We must not allow the momentum to decrease, or the process to be derailed by those who seek to fuel hatred, division and the killing of the people of Somalia, including as a result of the smuggling of arms, which takes place despite the arms embargo.

The humanitarian and security crises engulfing the Darfur region in the Sudan are a cause for serious concern to all of us. A lot has been said about that grave situation, but not much has been done to contain the humanitarian and political crises.

However, my delegation is hopeful that words will finally translate into action. We had hoped that, with the help of the African Union mediators, the representatives of the Government of the Sudan and the two rebel groups — the Sudan Liberation Army (SLA) and the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) — could be persuaded to sign and respect the protocol on security. We reiterate our call to all concerned parties to enter into negotiations. We wish to remind the Government of the Sudan that it is its primary responsibility, first and foremost, to protect the civilian life of its nationals.

The Great Lakes region remains politically volatile. This situation has been exacerbated by the recent massacre of refugees from the Democratic Republic of the Congo at the Gatumba refugee camp in western Burundi. We hope that the fact that the Forces for National Liberation (FNL) have claimed responsibility for the killings would make investigations easier.

The peace process in the Democratic Republic of the Congo remains elusive, at a time when we had thought that the gains that had been made from the Congolese dialogue, in South Africa, could be consolidated. We reiterate the call by the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for renewed commitment by the Transitional Government in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Security Council and the international community to work in full partnership to see the transitional process through to elections scheduled for 2005.

It is worth mentioning that, at the regional level, the Southern African Development Community (SADC) heads of State or Government, at their recent summit in Mauritius, mandated the SADC Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation actively to remain seized of the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

My delegation has never condoned the killings of Israelis by the Palestinians or of Palestinians by the Israelis. We have always considered the root causes of the problem in the Middle East, which is the illegal occupation of Palestinian lands by Israel. That problem has been exacerbated by the construction by Israel of a separation wall in the occupied Palestinian territory. The International Court of Justice, the principal judicial organ of the United Nations, on 9 July 2004 rendered its advisory opinion that such construction was contrary to international law. We therefore appeal to Israel to implement the important resolution adopted by the General Assembly in view of the Court's advisory opinion. Moreover, it is our submission that, unless and until the issue of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people is addressed vigorously, urgently and truthfully, peace and security will remain elusive in the Middle East.

We should perhaps recall that, four years ago, we gathered in this very Hall with hope for, and anticipation of, a better life for all humankind in the twenty-first century, as we adopted the Millennium Declaration and the Millennium Development Goals. We set time-bound and measurable goals for combating, inter alia, poverty, hunger, disease, the spread of HIV and AIDS, illiteracy, environmental degradation and discrimination against women. Needless to say, we are today, as we were then, committed to the achievement of those goals.

However, we did not anticipate that, as we approach the comprehensive review in 2005, the HIV/AIDS pandemic would have become the greatest threat to life itself, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa. Undoubtedly, the HIV/AIDS pandemic threatens to render futile and irrelevant all our efforts at the betterment of humankind, including the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals.

As early as the year 2000, Lesotho had declared HIV/AIDS a national disaster, and various measures were being taken at the national level to control and manage the pandemic. We have not been alone in that fight, fortunately. It is in that spirit that we wish to recognize and appreciate the dedication of Mr. Stephen Lewis, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for HIV/AIDS in Africa, and of Mr. James Morris, Special Envoy for Humanitarian Needs in Southern Africa.

Through his advocacy, Mr. Lewis has helped Lesotho start a robust programme of antiretroviral treatment, while Mr. Morris's initiatives have ensured food supply for vulnerable and orphaned children. Interventions of this nature give credence to the lofty declarations adopted at various international summits on the HIV/AIDS pandemic, as they complement and strengthen our own initiatives and limited resources.

My delegation reiterates the call for increased support for the New Partnership for Africa's

Development (NEPAD), the framework for achieving the Millennium Development Goals in Africa. It is yet another mechanism that will enable African countries to fight the HIV/AIDS pandemic, to eradicate poverty and to reduce the high unemployment rate.

In the same context, the Millennium Challenge Account is indeed a worthy and commendable initiative by the Government of the United States of America to launch the least developed countries on the road to sound and sustainable development.

The prevailing situations in Western Sahara and in Cuba continue to be of major concern. My delegation will — because it must — repeat the statement we have made on many previous occasions: that the people of Western Sahara have suffered long enough. We have therefore noted with appreciation the latest reaffirmation by the Security Council of its support for the 1991 settlement plan, allowing the nations of Western Sahara to determine the future of the disputed territory in a referendum. We hope that the referendum will be held soon, and urge that this be the case.

By the same token, the unilateral economic embargo against Cuba is causing untold misery to the people of that country. My delegation believes that, when two countries are at war with each other, or when a country has been condemned by the international community for gross misconduct, an economic embargo could be justifiable. However, we are not aware that any war has been declared against Cuba, or that the Government of Cuba has compromised or broken international law. We therefore remain in the dark as to what might justify the victimization of millions of Cubans by the unilateral economic blockade, for we contend that it is the sovereign, democratic and, indeed, sacred right of the people of Cuba to determine the system of Government most appropriate for their country. Accordingly, we urge that normalcy be restored to Cuba through the removal of the economic blockade.

The coming into operation of the International Criminal Court signifies, in our view, an end to impunity. We are elated that there now exists an international body that can take over when national courts are unable or unwilling to try perpetrators of the most egregious violations of human rights. We would indeed live in a safer world if State parties to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court adhered to it, and if the Court attained universal jurisdiction. My delegation encourages States that have not yet ratified the Statute to do so as a matter of urgency — indeed, as a matter of common sense.

We are pleased to note that the ICC has commenced investigations in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Uganda. We congratulate both these sister countries for their cooperation with the ICC.

In order for the United Nations family to address today's challenges effectively, the Organization must be reformed, with the Security Council being the central focus of that effort. The Security Council must reflect the reality of the international community in the twenty-first century. That must be done against the background of multilateralism, upon which international peace and security is premised. In that regard, allow me to congratulate His Excellency Mr. Julian Hunte, President of the General Assembly at its fifty-eighth session, for the hard work and commitment he displayed as the Chair of the Open-ended Working Group on the Reform of the Security Council.

In conclusion, let me reiterate that it is only through solidarity, unity of purpose and honesty among us Member States that the United Nations will defeat in our time the greatest challenges ever to face humankind. Otherwise, as Secretary-General Kofi Annan stressed in his opening statement, history will indeed judge us harshly.

The President *(spoke in French)*: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister and Minister for Defence and Public Service of the Kingdom of Lesotho for the statement he has just made.

The Right Honourable Pakalitha Bethuel Mosisili, Prime Minister and Minister for Defence and Public Service of the Kingdom of Lesotho, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by the Honourable Lawrence Gonzi, Prime Minister of the Republic of Malta

The President *(spoke in French)*: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Republic of Malta.

The Honourable Lawrence Gonzi, Prime Minister of the Republic of Malta, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President *(spoke in French)*: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Lawrence

Gonzi, Prime Minister of the Republic of Malta, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Gonzi (Malta): I would like first to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session. You have an important and challenging task ahead. In executing your duties you can be assured of my full support and that of the Maltese delegation.

I take this opportunity to express our appreciation to the President of the General Assembly at its fifty-eighth session, His Excellency Mr. Julian Hunte. Over the last twelve months he has successfully guided the Assembly's work with exemplary dedication and initiative.

I would also like, at the outset of my intervention this afternoon, to take the opportunity to express the solidarity of the Maltese people with those countries and people who have suffered loss of life and damage to property as a result of the recent spate of hurricanes and tropical storms, particularly the people of Haiti. We, the Maltese people, pledge our support in this hour of need.

It is a source of particular satisfaction for me to address the Assembly for the first time as Prime Minister of Malta, and also for Malta in its new role as a member of the European Union. The President of the Union's Council of Ministers, the Foreign Minister of the Netherlands, has already laid before the Assembly the objectives and priorities of the 25 members of the Union for the coming months.

The upholding and development of international law and effective multilateralism are central to the European Union's external actions. The role of the United Nations is vital in this regard. Malta has consistently supported the view that the international community needs this universal forum within which it can collectively deliberate and act upon the many problems that confront it. Our membership in the European Union gives renewed scope and added dimension to our commitment to the United Nations and its role in international affairs.

Recent events have raised urgent questions about the extent to which the United Nations is fulfilling the role envisaged for it under the Charter. Inevitably this leads to some serious concerns about the effectiveness of our Organization. Nevertheless, the questions which have been raised do not diminish the case not only for its continued existence but also for its strengthening as a world body. As we survey the latest developments in crises spots around the globe, the realization intensifies that solutions to the major problems of our age are beyond the grasp and control of any single nation or particular group of nations, however powerful and determined.

The international system is itself frequently overwhelmed by the immensity and complexity of many of the problems it faces. The United Nations is indeed at the forefront of action in the most critical areas — furthering development, relieving suffering, safeguarding human rights, combating terrorism, fighting environmental degradation, fostering sustainability, resolving conflicts, promoting peace and disarmament and upholding the rule of international law.

Each year we derive a measure of comfort from the knowledge that some progress is being recorded in certain areas. In this year's report the Secretary-General mentions last July's Framework Agreement that put the Doha Round of trade negotiations back on track; he refers to the contribution that United Nations peace missions are making towards the gradual improvement of the situation in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Somalia and the Central African Republic, as well as in Afghanistan, Papua New Guinea, Guatemala and Haiti. He records the launching of an important new programme in the fight against HIV/AIDS; he notes that for the second consecutive year the global refugee figure has decreased by nearly 1 million, and he believes that meeting the Millennium Development Goals by the target date of 2015 remains achievable.

At the same time, however, the Secretary-General highlights a bewildering array of areas on which no visible progress can be registered, in spite of the fact that, as the Secretary-General reminds us, there are at present more than 56,000 uniformed personnel and some 11,000 civilian staff from 97 countries serving in 16 United Nations missions worldwide, and in spite of the fact that the whole United Nations system, including the specialized agencies, is wholeheartedly engaged in the work of promoting economic and social progress and development.

The humanitarian crisis in Darfur, in western Sudan, is one stark manifestation of an apparently unbridgeable gap between intention and execution. The daily visions on television screens throughout the world of thousands of refugees suffering and dying overwhelm the impact that a steady but slow diplomacy may be making in its own right. In Iraq, in Palestine and in Israel, the fact that in those difficult realities hardly a single day goes by without news of people dying violently in armed actions is in sharp contrast with the limited reports on continuing efforts to find peaceful and viable solutions. Silently, across our globe of plenty with its advanced technology, the fact remains that in spite of our collective efforts millions of individuals, many of them children, continue to suffer and die in conditions of absolute poverty, malnutrition and disease.

Over the next 12 months two events will provide a special opportunity for the United Nations membership to focus on the key issues that challenge the vitality and effectiveness of our Organization. The High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change, appointed by the Secretary-General last year, will soon produce its report. The Secretary-General expects that the Panel, after examining the threats we face and evaluating our existing policies, processes and institutions, will make bold and practicable recommendations. It will be up to us as Member States, collectively and individually, to be equally bold and practical in responding to those recommendations.

The Panel's report will be followed in 2005 by a high-level meeting on the five-year review of the Millennium Declaration, as well as the commemoration of the sixtieth anniversary of the United Nations. Five years after what was expected to be the dawn of a new era, the time will be ripe for some dramatic results to emerge, not least at the institutional level.

High on the agenda in this context is the reform of the Security Council. As currently constituted, the Council suffers from three noticeable weaknesses. First, it has limited means of adequately addressing the development issues involved in security matters. Secondly, the regional distribution of authority in the Council is severely lopsided. And, thirdly, the great majority of Member States, especially the smaller ones, are underrepresented in the deliberations of the Council. Urgent remedies need to be found for all these weaknesses for the Council to be able to continue to play a relevant role in the twenty-first century.

In its turn, the General Assembly needs to greatly intensify current efforts to enhance the strengths inherent in its universality, while discarding the debilitating and time-consuming procedures and working methods that such universality has bred. The major organs and specialized agencies of the United Nations system also need to devise improved ways of harmonizing, through the Economic and Social Council, their many impressive, but often disparate, efforts to foster sustainable social and economic development.

One of the underlying strengths of the United Nations system lies in the manner in which it permits action at the regional level to insert itself into global efforts towards peace, security and cooperation. In recent years, the progressive strengthening of the African Union has added a welcome partner to the regional framework, in what is, unfortunately, the region of greatest need.

The recently enlarged European Union has also been progressively enhancing its cooperation with the United Nations at both the regional and higher levels. The Secretary-General refers in his report on the work of the Organization (A/59/1) to the significant progress in EU/United Nations cooperation on conflict prevention, peace-building and post-conflict reconstruction, as well as in crisis management activities.

One area in which the EU and the United Nations are active and important partners concerns the question of Palestine. As members of the Quartet, the EU and the United Nations play a significant role by injecting a much-needed balance and objectivity into an issue tormented by violence and passion. Both the EU and the United Nations are by right major stakeholders in the issue. History and geographical proximity underpin the special interest of all EU member States in the prosperity and well-being of both Israelis and Palestinians. The creation and peaceful coexistence of two neighbouring States, Israel and Palestine, was one of the United Nations very first, but unfortunately still unfulfilled, recommendations.

After decades of bitterness and wrong turns, the issue of Palestine remains jeopardized by the forces of extremism and intransigence. But extremism and intransigence — as manifested by both the perpetrators of Palestinian suicide bombings and Israeli advocates of a continuing and forceful military occupation of Palestinian territories — do have a counterbalance on both sides, as manifested by the Geneva Initiative of late last year, among many other examples. The EU and the United Nations need to continuously exert their influence and pressure on both sides to persuade them to give greater heed and credibility to the voices of reason which lie in their midst.

The path to legality and reconciliation has been defined in the road map, in the many resolutions of the Security Council and the General Assembly and, most recently, in the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice. Even in the face of constant setbacks on the ground, the EU and United Nations Quartet partners need to remain steadfast in their insistence that the road to peace can only be set within those parameters.

Malta looks at the problem both from its tragic humanitarian dimension as well as from its far-reaching implications for peace and security. One important concern for us in that regard is the impact that the problem has on issues of peace and security in the Middle East in general and the Mediterranean area in particular.

One of the primary objectives of the European Union is to promote the development, through partnership, of a common zone of peace, prosperity and progress in the Mediterranean and the Middle East. In recent months the Union has elaborated a policy agenda for that strategic partnership linking together a number of instruments and mechanisms that have been put in place over the years. The Euro-Mediterranean Partnership — the Barcelona or Euromed process — and the European Neighbourhood Policy are the frameworks of that policy. A key element in the EU approach is the parallel importance assigned to the processes of security-building and to cooperation in the social, economic, cultural and humanitarian fields. In that way it ensures that the evolving relationships in the Euro-Mediterranean area are tailored to the specific concerns and needs of the individual countries and regions.

For the Balkan region, the framework provided by the European Neighbourhood Policy — and the prospect of consolidating relationships with the European Union which it implies — constitutes an important contributory factor towards growth and stability. With the exception of the situation in Kosovo, which remains disturbing, and some other examples, progress in the Balkan region is encouraging.

The almost decade-long EuroMed process has gradually but steadily put into place a useful structure for the strengthening and consolidation of relationships among the countries of the Mediterranean. It not only contributes to the economic and social development of individual countries, but also provides a stable background in which some of the wider problems may be tackled, taking into account the strong linkage that exists between security and cooperation in Europe and in the Mediterranean. It needs strengthening and broadening, and in that context, the participation of Libya in the Barcelona Euromed process would be particularly welcome.

One such issue concerns the question of migration from the southern to the northern shores of the Mediterranean. As in other parts of the world, that issue needs to be tackled from the economic, social and political, as well as the humanitarian, perspective. Because of its geographical location and small size, Malta has a special sensitivity to the many problems and complexities of the issue. We are hopeful that the spirit of cooperation and understanding provided by the EuroMed process can help countries in our region to successfully tackle the challenges involved.

Over the last few months, an important development took place in our region in the context of disarmament. Libya's decision to renounce its programme of weapons of mass destruction has been welcomed by all. As a longstanding friend and close neighbour of Libya, Malta has particular reasons to welcome this development and the increased opportunities it now creates for Libya to play a significant role in the process of Euro-Mediterranean security and cooperation.

It is reasonable to argue that the framework of regional stability and cooperation provided by the Euro-Mediterranean process was one factor that contributed to Libya's decision to renounce its programme. Nevertheless, problems relating to the development of weapons of mass destruction still exist in other regions of the world. The role that can be played by initiatives encouraging regional stability and economic and social development in the resolution of these problems should not be underestimated.

We must also look at the problems raised by the threat of new weapons of mass destruction as part of the wider issue of disarmament in its many aspects. The continuing commitment to the major multilateral treaties and increased efforts to intensify measures of verification and compliance are of paramount importance in this regard. Equally important is the need to bring the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty into force without further delay.

The problem of the proliferation of weapons, especially weapons of mass destruction, has in our day assumed a new and frightening dimension in its possible linkage with terrorism. In this regard, as the Secretary-General points out, the effective implementation of Security Council resolution 1540 (2004), adopted earlier this year, should complement ongoing efforts to strengthen existing multilateral and non-proliferation regimes.

The fight against terrorism involves all of us and needs to be pursued with firmness and tenacity. At the same time, the struggle must take place on our terms and not those of the terrorists. As the Secretary-General takes every opportunity to remind us, this struggle must not take place at the expense of the fundamental freedoms and basic dignity of individuals, neither must we allow the legitimate concern to eradicate terrorism in all its aspects to distract the commitment of the global community in its endeavour towards the economic and social development of the less advantaged regions of the world.

In conclusion, our concerns for the safety of our people must be counter-balanced by the assurances that those responsible for these threats will be dealt with by a coherent and effective system of trans-frontier justice that reflects respect for the rule of law. The international community's endeavours in recent years have found fruition in the establishment of the International Criminal Court, a functioning institution that increases its effectiveness the more widely all the members of the family of nations subscribe to it.

In encouraging reflection on these topical issues, I feel confident in the credentials offered by my country, whose level of commitment to the United Nations certainly makes up for any physical limitations we may have. Malta has been instrumental in developing the concept of common heritage, in relation both to the high seas and to climate change, and we have emphasized the importance of intergenerational solidarity, as evidenced not only by our initiatives on ageing but also as the host country for the International Institute on Ageing.

As in previous years, the issues before of the General Assembly are many and complex. The density and variety of the agenda we have before us are both a challenge and an opportunity for our Organization. I trust that under your able guidance, Mr. President, we will find the energy and wisdom to meet these challenges and exploit these opportunities. Humanity is counting on all of us.

The President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the Republic of Malta for the statement he has just made.

The Honourable Lawrence Gonzi, Prime Minister of the Republic of Malta, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Alhaji Aliu Mahama, Vice-President of the Republic of Ghana

The President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the Vice-President of the Republic of Ghana.

Alhaji Aliu Mahama, Vice-President of the Republic of Ghana, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President (*spoke in French*): I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Alhaji Aliu Mahama, Vice-President of the Republic of Ghana, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Mahama (Ghana): I have the distinct honour to congratulate you, Mr. President, a distinguished African diplomat, on your election to preside over the fifty-ninth session of this Assembly and to wish you success in your undertaking. I would also like to commend your predecessor, Mr. Julian Hunte, for the dedication and commitment that he brought to bear on his stewardship of the fifty-eighth session.

Three years ago, a terrible tragedy hit this city. The unprecedented terrorist attacks of 11 September resulted in the death of thousands of innocent people of many nationalities, including some from my own country, Ghana. The whole world shared the pain and sorrow of New York in the aftermath of those atrocities. The whole world also rose in solidarity with the people of the United States to ensure that such tragedies would not happen again.

11 September reminds us of the importance of seeking a multilateral and peaceful means for the maintenance of international peace and security, especially now, when it has become evident that only collective, multilateral efforts will suffice to defeat the new scourge of mankind, global terrorism.

The United Nations has an indispensable role to play, being the most universal and representative intergovernmental organization and the best forum for the practice of multilateralism. However, the success of multilateralism and collective security will depend on how the reforms of the United Nations system are implemented. In this regard, we applaud the initiative of our illustrious compatriot, Secretary-General Kofi Annan, in setting up the United Nations High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change, to make proposals on how the United Nations can best be reformed to meet the new challenges of our world.

We, in Africa, agree that the objectives of the United Nations reforms, including the revitalization of the General Assembly and the reform of the Security Council, are aimed at enhancing the role of the Organization and its capacity to overcome current threats and emerging challenges. The reforms should be in conformity with the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter and the process must be based on full consultations in a democratic and transparent manner. To this end, we look forward to a revitalized General Assembly that would assume its rightful position as the most authoritative and representative organ of the United Nations.

With regard to the Security Council, the African position emphasizes the need to democratize and ensure equitable geographical representation, with Africa allotted no less than two permanent seats and five non-permanent seats in the expanded Security Council.

I wish to address the crucial issue of poverty eradication and the promotion of sustainable development in developing countries in which widespread poverty is endemic, particularly in Africa. As we strive to overcome our current economic woes, we need the world's solidarity, resources, technical know-how and support. The historic Millennium Summit of the United Nations, which brought together 189 nations in September 2000 and adopted the Millennium Declaration, was a clarion call for action to solve these problems and set forth the Millennium Development Goals with measurable goals and targets for combating them. On that occasion, the international community pledged to spare no effort to free our fellow men, women and children from the abject and dehumanizing conditions of extreme poverty.

Africa has adopted the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), which reaffirms our belief that Africans have the primary responsibility to solve the problems of poverty, hunger, disease and illiteracy afflicting the majority of our population and to stem Africa's marginalization from global markets. In tandem, we are striving to foster political stability, accountable and transparent governance under the rule of law, because we believe it is the right thing to do. Ghana has volunteered as the first country in Africa for the African Peer Review Mechanism, and my Government is cooperating with the review panel to facilitate the preparation of the review report, because we in Ghana cherish very much our democracy and our commitment of respect for human rights and the rule of law.

Our renewed resolve, within the context of NEPAD, to accelerate the sustainable development of the continent, dovetails fully with the avowed commitment of the international community to help achieve the Millennium Development Goals. It was, therefore, a very welcome and positive development when the General Assembly, in its resolution 57/7 of 4 November 2002, urged the international community to organize support for African countries within the framework of the principles, objectives and priorities of NEPAD. However, for this convergence of vision and effort to yield the desired results, there must be genuine partnership between Africa and the international community.

The implementation of NEPAD and the creation of institutions such as the Pan-African Parliament, the Peace and Security Council, the Economic, Social and Cultural Council, and various commissions of the recently established African Union, reflect Africa's determination to be the architect of its own future. The initiatives of the Economic Community of West African States, the West African regional body currently chaired by the President of Ghana, Mr. John Agyekum Kufuor, in dealing with the conflicts that have recently plagued our region are good examples of this development. Accra has been the venue for successful peace talks concerning Liberia and, most recently, on 29 July 2004, Côte d'Ivoire, which has revived hopes for a durable peace in that important West African country.

The important decisions taken at the last summit of the African Union in Addis Ababa have given cause for cautious optimism as the political leadership, Governments, the public, civil society and the private sector now seem to have embarked upon a journey of collaborative effort to put an end to conflicts and to focus instead on the promotion of peace, security and sustainable development for the benefit of the peoples of the continent.

It is disheartening, though, to observe that, despite the good intentions of the international community, as exemplified at the various international forums that have followed the Millennium Summit, there has not been any significant achievement due to the absence of genuine global partnership for development. There continues to be an agonizing paradox between the summit and conference declarations of a new global partnership and the persistence of an asymmetrical global system that works largely against the interests of developing countries.

Quite evidently, the laudable long-term initiatives to halve hunger and poverty by the year 2015 cannot be achieved without a fundamental restructuring of the global trade system, particularly in agricultural products. Such an initiative should include developed countries' dismantling subsidies and lowering tariffs, thereby helping to uphold and safeguard an open, equitable, rule-based, predictable, non-discriminatory trading and financial system. The concerns of developing countries have been reiterated in this Assembly over the years; we therefore urge our developed partners to act now.

For many countries in Africa, stable long-term planning will be impossible without more systematic and sustained debt relief. Despite the progress recorded in the implementation of the enhanced Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Debt Initiative and the provision of substantial debt relief by bilateral official creditors, achieving long-term debt sustainability and, at the same time, a reduction in poverty as targeted, remains a major problem for many African countries. We, therefore, welcome the initiative of British Prime Minister Tony Blair in setting up the African Commission.

Official development assistance (ODA), as we are aware, continues to play an essential role in complementing other sources of financing for development and creating a congenial environment for private sector activity. Although ODA flows, which decreased in the 1990s, have picked up in recent years, the fact that these flows remain, on average, still far below internationally agreed targets is a major cause for concern. In this connection, it is pertinent to recall that an additional $50 billion a year in development assistance would be required as a minimum to meet the Millennium Development Goals. The fundamental question facing the international community is whether it is committed to the indispensable, challenging, but ultimately rewarding global partnership, which alone can make this dream come true.

The HIV/AIDS pandemic is a global emergency and a key threat to achieving the Millennium Development Goals, especially for countries in sub-Saharan Africa. The pandemic has caused untold suffering and death in our countries, destroying entire communities, reversing development gains and posing a serious security threat.

Unfortunately, despite the substantial measures taken by the Government in combating the scourge, Ghana's efforts have been severely constrained by a lack of adequate resources required to prevent new infections, provide care and support for people, particularly women and children living with HIV/AIDS. We wish to urge the international community to provide the needed resources for the fight against this global emergency.

Ghana attaches great importance to the empowerment of women to make them equal partners in the formulation and implementation of development policies. Since the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, gender equality has been an essential element of Ghana's efforts to attain sustainable development. The active involvement of women in political processes and decision-making at all levels and in all sectors is being vigorously pursued. Impediments such as discrimination and violence against women are being dealt with through education, advocacy and legislation.

Despite the strong political will within the international community to create a world fit for children, the reality in many parts of the world is a far cry from the ideals voiced at the twenty-seventh special session of the General Assembly, on children. We call for the adoption of effective policies to eradicate poverty, to ensure access to education and to provide families with support to guarantee the well-being of children. Decisive international cooperation is also required to strengthen legal and other preventive mechanisms to tackle effectively the increasing practice of child trafficking for unconscionable exploitative purposes.

Ghana believes that the staff of the Organization, who make sacrifices daily to maintain peace and security in zones of conflict and humanitarian disaster, deserve to be provided with a secure and safe environment in which to operate. In that regard, we will continue to condemn all attacks against United Nations personnel and call for firm action by States to establish conditions that prevent such attacks, in fulfilment of the obligations of host countries towards the United Nations and its personnel.

Ghana, as a major troop-contributing country, will continue to support United Nations peacekeeping operations globally, as well as in Africa. That commitment, which began with our participation in the United Nations Operation in the Congo in 1960, is born of the firm moral conviction in our solidarity for humanity and the knowledge that a lack of peace and stability anywhere can be a real threat to peace and security for all of us.

In conclusion, I urge Member States to rededicate themselves individually and collectively to the ideals that underpin the Organization and provide it with the commensurate resources as it strives to fulfil the aspirations of the peoples of the world. We cannot, should not and must not fail in that undertaking.

The President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Vice-President of the Republic of Ghana for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Alhaji Aliu Mahama, Vice-President of the Republic of Ghana, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mrs. Sandra Pierantozzi, Vice-President and Minister of Health of the Republic of Palau

The President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the Vice-President of the Republic of Palau.

Mrs. Sandra Pierantozzi, Vice-President and Minister of Health of the Republic of Palau, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President (*spoke in French*): I have great pleasure in welcoming Her Excellency Mrs. Sandra Pierantozzi, Vice-President of the Republic of Palau, and inviting her to address the General Assembly.

Mrs. Pierantozzi (Palau): This is a momentous year for our country as we celebrate, on 1 October, the tenth anniversary of our independence and our membership in this institution. Palau was the last country to emerge from the Trusteeship System, having been administered by the United States under the supervision of the United Nations longer than any country in the world. It was the United Nations that provided Palau with a willing forum in which to express and ultimately achieve our right to sovereignty, and for that we are ever thankful. I am also happy to observe, on this tenth anniversary, that this year we established, for the first time, a permanent mission in New York so that we can enhance our ability to meet our international responsibilities.

It was the United States, through its administration and willing cooperation during our peaceful emergence into independence, that assured us the liberty and the values that guide us today. For that extraordinary legacy, we today express our deep gratitude to the United States of America.

This is a good year for Palau to deepen its involvement, since it coincides with the world's preparation for the Mauritius conference and the increased emphasis at the United Nations on the unique challenges facing small island developing States. While images of swaying palm trees and white sand beaches prevail in the world's imagination, they are only part of the story. In truth and in fact, the remoteness and the isolation of Palau make it a very difficult place to develop a self-reliant economy, provide medical care and education to its people and deter aggression and terrorism. Fuel and transportation prices are among the highest in the world. After four successive colonial administrations, our infrastructure is quite incomplete, and our most promising hope for the development of a sustainable economy, our pristine environment, is threatened by factors beyond our control, such as the failure of all industrialized countries to reach agreement on implementing the Kyoto Protocol.

We have created a democratic society and ensured human rights for our people, but without international focus, we will not be able to provide hope and opportunity to our children, and we will continue to watch as they leave their homeland to seek an education and a career elsewhere. For no matter what statistics may be advanced, what references to gross national product may be debated, until we can provide our children with the incentive to stay and help build our country, we will have lost. Thus, the Mauritius process is critical for Palau, and we trust that the developed countries of the world will embrace it.

Similarly, we trust that United Nations agencies will sharpen their focus on the small island developing States and correct what we view as a current imbalance, in support of the fragile small States of the world. We applaud the recent efforts of the Global Environmental Facility (GEF) to streamline assistance to Palau through the creation of an innovative North Pacific subregional programme that will build our capacity to protect our environment and create a sustainable economy.

We are troubled, however, by a growing tendency in the donor community to demand that small countries like ours prove our capacity before assistance can be delivered. This is a catch-22 situation that threatens to halt our development. The only way we can build our capacity to execute projects that will save, for example, our unique biodiversity is to experience the hard work of completing projects and learning from our experience.

This observation does not mean that we are reluctant to accept the obligations and responsibilities inherent in receiving assistance. We are willing and eager to be monitored by the international community in our performance. We firmly believe that we should be held accountable for the quality and the transparency of our efforts.

It is ironic that tiny countries such as ours, where so many of the world's environmental treasures exist, are denied the assistance they need due to a perceived lack of capacity to navigate the unwieldy bureaucracies of the international organizations charged with protecting those very treasures.

As already noted, the failure of the world to come to agreement on implementing the Kyoto Protocol will contribute to the destruction of our marine and terrestrial resources. Palau, like many other small island developing States, is a window on the world's future in this regard and must be carefully observed. We urge the GEF to create real funding opportunities for adaptation and mitigation measures in a proactive and streamlined fashion before it is too late.

In a similar vein, we are increasingly aware of the particularly damaging fishing practice of deep-sea bottom trawling. Increasingly employed on the high seas as coastal fisheries are depleted, this technique entails dragging heavy equipment along the seabed, completely destroying established coral, sponge and related communities that have taken centuries to develop. We are a culture of fishing people and find this practice unacceptable. As we participated with our Pacific colleagues in eliminating drift-net fishing some years ago, we now call upon the world to join us in declaring a moratorium on deep sea bottom trawling before this practice does any more irremediable damage.

Last month, Palau's accession to the Group of Asian States created the largest regional grouping in the United Nations. Two critical issues involving our Asian region also have great global significance.

First, for the United Nations to be effective at ensuring international peace and security, all nations, large and small, should be represented in its deliberations. The Republic of China on Taiwan should no longer be kept on the sidelines of the most important international Organization. The principle of universality should be applied so that the 23 million people of Taiwan can bring their talents, their energy and their principled democratic positions to the organizations, bodies, specialized agencies and programmes of the United Nations, thereby aiding the rest of the world in pursuing our mutual agenda.

Secondly, and also in pursuit of the most effective means to strengthen the credibility of the United Nations, Palau urges the United Nations to reform the Security Council to reflect the reality of the international community in the twenty-first century so that countries that play a major role in the maintenance of international peace and security always participate in the decision-making process of the Security Council. Palau believes that the Security Council should be expanded to include additional developing and developed countries as new members, and that Japan's stellar record of contribution is a solid basis for Japan's assumption of permanent membership of the Security Council. Japan has been a leader in international initiatives for many years, and it is for that reason that Palau takes this strongly felt position.

Much of my presentation today has focused on the enormous threats to vulnerable island States like Palau. We agree with the Secretary-General, who observed in his opening remarks to the high-level segment of the twelfth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development, held at United Nations Headquarters from 28 to 30 April 2004, that "high-level political attention has been diverted from sustainable development by the recent emphasis given to terrorism, weapons of mass destruction and the war in Iraq". But Palau also understands that the scourge of global terrorism and its immoral violence against innocent people must be defeated. We are proud of our sons and daughters serving in the United States military. Only last week, one of those sons, a Marine fighting side by side with Coalition forces in Iraq, paid the ultimate price, marking the first death of a Palauan in the struggle with global terrorism. Our forces are small in number but, like Corporal Ngirmidol, large in loyalty, commitment and idealism. No one should make any mistake about that.

Palau is grateful to the United States for allowing us to achieve our independence and thus to join the international community's quest for world peace. Nonetheless, a balanced international agenda which includes a determined focus on sustainable development is required if Palau is to achieve some measure of economic self-reliance, and if the world as we know it is to survive.

The President *(spoke in French)*: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Vice President and Minister of Health of the Republic of Palau for the statement she has just made.

Mrs. Sandra Pierantozzi, Vice-President and Minister of Health of the Republic of Palau, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by His Serene Highness Prince Albert, Crown Prince of the Principality of Monaco

The President *(spoke in French)*: The Assembly will now hear an address by His Serene Highness Prince Albert, Crown Prince of the Principality of Monaco.

His Serene Highness Prince Albert, Crown Prince of the Principality of Monaco, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President *(spoke in French)*: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have great pleasure in welcoming His Serene Highness Prince Albert, Crown Prince of the Principality of Monaco, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Crown Prince Albert (Monaco) *(spoke in French)*: It is with great pleasure that I congratulate you, Sir, on your unanimous election to preside over the fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly, an election that offers Africa its tenth presidency. The Gabonese Republic thus has received from the international community the recognition it deserves and the French-speaking countries are delighted to see one of our own guiding our debates. Be assured that the delegation of Monaco, which I am leading, will fully support you in your noble mission in the service of peace and development. I would also like to hail the Secretary-General for his courage and his unwavering commitment to peace.

A long time ago, the Organization began a process of thinking through the reforms that are required to improve its functioning. In that connection, I would like to congratulate the outgoing President of the Assembly, Mr. Julian Hunte, on his work during the fifty-eighth session; his perseverance made possible the adoption of new measures to revitalize the work of the General Assembly. While welcoming that progress, we know that we must continue along that path.

Dedication to democracy and to the rule of law, unswerving confidence in the virtues of multilateralism and respect for our differences allow us to move forward in a spirit of harmony and to continue to adapt the Organization to meet the challenges of our time. It is vital that the Organization be provided with the means to better respond to the expectations of the peoples of the world.

This is why the Principality supports initiatives aimed at improving the Organization's methods of work and, in particular, those regarding Security Council reform. Enlargement of the Council, in both permanent and non-permanent seats, will strengthen its capacity to contribute to the essential objectives of the maintenance of peace by providing more equitable representation of the diverse regions that compose the international community.

The fifteenth International AIDS Conference, held in Thailand last July, once again highlighted the devastation caused by this terrible pandemic as well as its disastrous social consequences. However, the Conference also demonstrated that when international organizations, Governments and civil society agree to work together, we can fight this scourge more effectively. In that struggle, the role of women is crucial. In my country, Her Serene Highness Princess Stephanie, my sister, created and chairs the Fight AIDS Monaco association that gives moral and material support to AIDS patients and their families while promoting information and prevention programmes.

For my part, I have expressed the wish that all of the Principality's school children participate in marking a world day for children orphaned by AIDS, to show their solidarity with these vulnerable children whose number could reach 100 million by the year 2010.

Once again this year, my country has been contributing to the Global Fund to fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, which was created following the twenty-sixth special session of the General Assembly, the first to be devoted to a disease. We have been providing regular support for the activities of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) since its creation, and I am pleased to announce that the Principality has decided to strengthen its financial cooperation with the Programme. We hope that the creation within UNAIDS of the Programme Acceleration Fund will allow us to meet specific needs defined by the recipient States themselves. In effect, we are convinced of the necessity for States to strengthen, on the one hand, their capacities in terms of basic social services and adequate sanitation facilities and on the other hand, to pursue public awareness and information campaigns.

Upon the initiative of His Serene Highness the Sovereign Prince, my father, the Principality of Monaco has always expressed its solidarity to the most underdeveloped populations. We share the concerns of world leaders regarding the adverse impact that the persistence of extreme poverty is having on international security.

We shall therefore consider most carefully the elaboration of a new global partnership designed to eliminate hunger and poverty and to advance economic development and social justice, as a continuation to the commitments undertaken at the Millennium Summit and during the Monterrey Conference.

Terrorism, unfortunately, has become a daily reality, as is attested to by, among others, the tragedy that took place in Beslan, which is repugnant to all of us. Our determination to fight it must remain unshaken and that is why we welcome the establishment of an executive directorate of the Counter-Terrorism Committee. In that domain, international cooperation is an essential element for effective action. No State, regardless of its size, can be a weak link that might endanger the efforts we are conducting together.

Therefore, the Principality intends to play its role in the battle which our Organization is waging against terrorism. Thus, Monaco has become a party to all of the twelve conventions designed to eradicate international terrorism and has adopted, as domestic legislation, appropriate measures for their implementation.

But the battle against terrorism also requires that we act irreproachably in terms of our respect for human rights. Accordingly, the Principality is making every effort to guarantee them on its territory; hence Monaco's forthcoming accession to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

The number of refugees and displaced persons who are displaced within their own countries continues to increase, and our response to the unbearable suffering of those human beings cannot be limited to our moral indignation. As in any urgent and complex emergency situation, civilians and the most vulnerable among them are the targets of harm and the worst types of abuse. The humanitarian disaster which continues to take place under our very eyes in Darfur has shown, once again, how limited we are in our capacity to enforce respect for human rights and for international humanitarian law.

In response to the appeal launched by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) during the special session of the General Assembly on children in 2002, the authorities of Monaco decided to earmark their traditional contribution to UNHCR towards primary education for refugee children. We hope to provide those children, whose world has been brutally shattered overnight, a substitute for their traditional educational environment, by allowing them to escape, albeit a little, those terrible conditions of daily life dominated by promiscuity and the anguish of having forever lost their homes.

Championing the interests of the child has always been one of our major concerns. To build a world fit for children, in keeping with the commitments undertaken during the May 2002 special session on children, the World Association of Children's Friends, presided over by my sister, Her Royal Highness the Princess of Hanover, organized in the Principality in April 2003, a round table on that subject. Unfortunately, the need is becoming clearer each day, to strengthen the area of international law designed to guarantee the rights of children and to assure that those laws are more effectively applied.

Thus, do not those particularly heinous crimes require an exceptionally strong response? Do we not need to ensure that the most serious violations of the rights of children do not fall under a statute of limitations and do we not need to extend the powers of the national jurisdictions by providing them with universal competence in that area?

The Principality of Monaco urges you to give thought to this, in other words, to plan for the adoption of a legal instrument which will make it possible here, to react against the impunity which continues to prevail, concerning the enrolment of child soldiers, the sexual exploitation of children and the despicable trade of which they are victims — to mention only the most revolting of those crimes.

The debate held last June in the Security Council served to reaffirm the timely nature of such considerations. By abolishing the statute of limitations for those horrendous crimes, we would be strengthening their prevention, as well as fulfilling our duty to honour the memory of the victims. By expanding the competences of our national jurisdictions so that borders no longer serve to limit our actions, we will be better able to cope with the development of the transnational organized crime network which defies our States and the legal order they are trying to establish.

I am fully aware that this essentially moral struggle — to ensure respect for the rights of the child — gives rise, given the present state of international law, to numerous legal difficulties. But is it not our duty to act when that legislation is no longer adapted to meet the challenges of our time, at a time when the international community is clearly closing its unified ranks, to put an end to those practices which are abhorrent to all of us?

Let us be courageous and foresighted in championing the most noble cause that exists — the defence of innocents. Let us respond to the appeal of Albert Einstein made so long ago that — there will be no progress in this world as long as there are unhappy children.

The President *(spoke in French)*: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Crown Prince of the Principality of Monaco for the statement he has just made.

Crown Prince Albert, Crown Prince of the Principality of Monaco, was escorted from the rostrum.

The President *(spoke in French)*: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Abdullah Gül, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Turkey.

Mr. Gül (Turkey): I would like to start by congratulating you, Sir, on your election as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session. I pledge the full support of my delegation for your endeavours. I would also like to pay tribute to your predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Julian Hunte for his able presidency.

We are world leaders at a time when our globe is undergoing an important phase of adaptation to new realities, opportunities and challenges.

As the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Kofi Annan, frequently states, we now possess the know-how to address our common concerns. The Millennium Summit, which was the largest gathering of world leaders, produced a historical document — the Millennium Declaration — which charts the right course for humanity in the new millennium.

The goals that the Millennium Declaration defined for humanity are ambitious, yet achievable. Reducing hunger and extreme poverty, spreading universal primary education, halting infectious diseases and reducing child mortality within 15 years continue to be urgent tasks.

Universal humanitarian challenges and chronic political-military conflicts are compounded with new and asymmetrical threats such as terrorism, narcotic drugs, organized crime, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and environmental problems.

On the other hand, racism, anti-Semitism, prejudicial attitudes against the tenets of certain creeds and cultures, among them those of Islam, and xenophobia add fuel to those menaces. In addition, the special and urgent needs of the African continent continue to require a collective response.

The United Nations system should be encouraged to intensify its role in addressing those issues. Confidence in the international order and in international institutions should not be undermined. A more effective and credible United Nations would be better able to face the common challenges of today. The Security Council should have a more representative and balanced character; indeed, representation in the Council must be inclusive and fair. That will increase its legitimacy and efficiency. In that respect, I would like to commend the efforts of the Secretary-General.

The correlation between good governance and peace and prosperity is valid both domestically and internationally. Therefore, a global agenda for reform should cover all aspects of domestic and international life. Each member of the international community has a stake in, and responsibility for, the implementation of such an agenda.

On our part, my Government, fully conscious of that correlation, has carried out sweeping political and economic reforms in the past two years. We have thus upgraded and deepened our democracy and consolidated an accountable, transparent and efficient administration and a dynamic civil society upholding the rule of law and human rights. The expectations of our people, as well as the relevant United Nations and European Union standards, inspired us in our reform drive. I take pride in the fact that many observers, both in the west and in the east, have seen in our experience the perfect embodiment of modernity, progress, identity and tradition.

I should like to take this opportunity to confirm Turkey's candidacy for a non-permanent seat in the Security Council for the term 2009-2010. In spite of its substantial contributions to peace and security, Turkey has not been a member of the Council for almost half a century. Therefore we rightfully expect the support of the General Assembly for our candidacy.

Our bid for a non-permanent seat is in tune with Turkey's larger efforts to secure peace, stability and security in its region and beyond. Turkey figures prominently in humanitarian activities, from Palestine to Darfur. We have been contributing increasing numbers to international peacekeeping missions whose geographical distribution ranges from Bosnia to Afghanistan.

Turkey has a unique position as the only member of the Organization of the Islamic Conference that is also a candidate for membership in the European Union. That position enables us to facilitate interaction and dialogue between the Islamic world and the West.

Turkey has numerous achievements to its credit in the process of helping to create an environment conducive to development, stability and progress in our region and beyond. The Black Sea Economic Cooperation, the Economic Cooperation Organization and the Stability Pact are good examples to that effect.

My Government has been taking a peaceful and problem-solving approach to world affairs. On the chronic issue of Cyprus, my Government fully supported Secretary-General Kofi Annan's good-offices mission, and we cooperated closely with him. The Secretary-General's settlement plan was the result of four years of serious negotiations between the two sides. They were conducted on the basis of a new bi-zonal partnership with a federal Government and two constituent States. The plan was put to separate referendums, with the prior agreement of all parties concerned. The Annan plan was overwhelmingly accepted by the Turkish Cypriots, but the Greek Cypriot leadership chose to reject it.

Mr. Sevilla Somoza (Nicaragua), Vice-President, took the Chair.

I profoundly regret the fact that an opportunity to resolve the longstanding problem of Cyprus was thus missed. As a result, a chance to grant fresh credibility to the United Nations was lost. A possible source of inspiration for peacemakers elsewhere, in the Middle East or the Caucasus, also disappeared.

The Secretary-General, in his report to the Security Council, clearly stated that the referendums drastically changed the situation on the island. It confirmed, once again, the existence of two equal peoples and their separate rights to decide their own fate.

The Secretary-General also called on the members of the Security Council to

> "give a strong lead to all States to cooperate both bilaterally and in international bodies, to eliminate unnecessary restrictions and barriers that have the effect of isolating the Turkish Cypriots and impeding their development" *(S/2004/437, p. 2)*.

Turkey remains committed to a lasting settlement in Cyprus. Five months have passed since the Turkish Cypriots, responding to the call of the international community, voted courageously in favour of the United Nations plan. However, they have yet to be rewarded for expressing their will to reunify the island. We urge the Security Council positively to respond to the Secretary-General's call. We also appeal to United Nations Member States to take concrete steps, at the bilateral level, to put an end to the isolation and punishment of the people of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus.

Turkey has been strongly supporting, and will continue to support, the preservation of peace and stability in south-east Europe.

We are glad to note that considerable progress has been achieved in this region thanks to the sustained efforts of the international community and of the Balkan countries themselves.

Turkey is determined to sustain the promising and constructive atmosphere in our relations with Greece. We hope that the improvement in bilateral relations will continue in the coming period. Our wide-ranging cooperation is expanding in every field. That will facilitate the settlement of all pending issues. It will also result in a climate of cooperation beneficial to the two countries, as well as peace, stability and security in the region as a whole.

Turkey believes that it is high time to start taking concrete steps towards eliminating the existing "frozen" conflicts in the southern Caucasus, such as those in Nagorno-Karabakh, Abkhazia and South Ossetia. As a neighbouring country, we are actively contributing to efforts aimed at achieving stability and prosperity in that region. To that end, we have been encouraging all the parties concerned while facilitating the ongoing process of dialogue. We hope that the Abkhazian conflict and the problems in South Ossetia will be overcome by peaceful means, within the framework of the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Georgia.

My Government supports a just and lasting solution to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict on the basis of the fundamental principles of international law, the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan and good-neighbourly relations. We expect the Armenian Government to fully comply with the relevant United Nations resolutions to reach such a solution.

The Middle East problem and the situation in Iraq and Afghanistan are the major conflicts responsible for compounding instability in the world and are leading to increasingly serious consequences.

The road map is the only available framework for a comprehensive settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian problem. Benefiting from its traditional ties with the parties, Turkey has already offered its active contribution to the implementation of the road map. We also support every effort that is initiated and coordinated in that context.

We join the call made by the Quartet yesterday. The resumption of the negotiating process between the two parties should remain the central objective of current efforts. It is important, likewise, that both sides fulfil their performance criteria as laid out in the road map. Terrorist attacks against the Israeli people must stop. So must the deliberate destruction of Palestinian lives and properties. The process of the reform of Palestinian institutions must be advanced. Israeli settlement activities must be immediately halted. The ruling of the International Court of Justice must be respected. And the living conditions of the Palestinians need to be urgently improved.

Any settlement would be incomplete without progress on all tracks, including those involving Syria and Lebanon.

My Government is focused on contributing to the improvement of the situation in Iraq. We appreciate the massive resources and political efforts mobilized by the United States Administration and the international community for the rehabilitation and reconstruction of Iraq. We sincerely hope those efforts yield the desired results soon. However, the humanitarian, political and security difficulties faced by the people of Iraq continue to adversely affect one another. It goes without saying that developments in Iraq are also affecting my country and causing suffering for my people, while, as we are a neighbouring country, most of Iraq's humanitarian needs are being supplied through Turkey.

The Iraqi transition is not only about the fate of the Iraqi nation. It is about the future of peace and prosperity in the whole region and beyond. That is the motive for Turkey's strong support of a united, territorially intact and democratic Iraq — an Iraq that is at peace with itself and with its neighbours. That should and can only be achieved with the full participation and support of the Iraqi people as a whole. More United Nations involvement would facilitate that task. The series of neighbouring countries meetings, initiated by Turkey, is also a valuable instrument to be taken into account. After all, as Iraq's success will be our collective success, so its failure will also be a collective failure. For its part, Turkey will continue to support the Iraqi interim Government's efforts in paving the way to normalcy and democracy.

Turkey's traditional support for the Afghan people will continue. The establishment of security, stability and a democratic system in Afghanistan is another urgent task. Freeing that country from terrorism, extremism and narcotics is of crucial importance for the international community. We should all work to make the upcoming elections a significant step towards those ends.

We all agree that terrorism has no justification. It can never claim to respect any religion, nation or cause. Indiscriminate killing of innocent people, be it in New York, Istanbul, Baghdad, Beslan or elsewhere, is a crime against humanity. We condemn those terrorist atrocities in the strongest terms.

As a country that has long suffered from terrorism, Turkey calls for more intensified multilateral cooperation. The United Nations system is an important platform in that respect and we extend our full support to efforts under its aegis.

We also strongly believe in the urgent need to strengthen the control regimes for weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems. We will continue to support ongoing work to ensure full adherence to the legal instruments in that field. The creation of nuclear-weapon-free zones is an important way of strengthening peace and security in the world and in all regions, including the Middle East.

Turkey is determined to use every effort and deploy all the means at its disposal in order to strengthen peace and stability in its immediate region and beyond. We will try to use the influence of our multidimensional ties and deep-rooted relations to achieve that goal. We remain strongly committed to translating into reality the universal validity of the noble values and principles enshrined in the United Nations Charter.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on Her Excellency Mrs. Benita Ferrero-Waldner, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Austria.

Mrs. Ferrero-Waldner (Austria): I should like to begin by congratulating Mr. Jean Ping on his election as President of the fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly. He may be sure that Austria will fully support him in carrying out his important task.

I fully subscribe to the statement made by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands on behalf of the European Union, which expressed the position of the European Union regarding the various global and regional challenges we face today. I would like to emphasize a few additional points from our own perspective.

Over the past few years we have had to reassess key concepts of our national and international security environment. With the emergence of new and complex threats, in particular terrorism in combination with the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, the international community faces unprecedented challenges for which it has to find legitimate responses. Just recently, we witnessed the horrifying terrorist attack against innocent school children in Beslan. This was only the last of a whole series of heinous attacks in all regions of the world targeted against innocents.

Austria is committed to full cooperation with other States and United Nations bodies involved in counter-terrorism and is working to promote the whole range of United Nations action against terrorism. In Vienna, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and its Terrorism Prevention Branch make an important contribution by rendering assistance to Member States in implementing national legislation required by Security Council resolution 1373 (2001) and in building their national capacity to do so.

Austria is convinced that only effective multilateralism based on the rule of law can address the new and complex challenges that the international community faces today. We support the efforts of the Quartet in the Middle East peace process, and we urge Israel and the Palestinians to implement their respective obligations. The road map remains the only way forward towards a just, comprehensive and lasting settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict leading to two States living side by side in peace and security.

The United Nations continues to play a key role in South-Eastern Europe, especially in Kosovo. We welcome the recent appointment of Mr. Søren Jessen-Petersen as Special Representative for Kosovo. In that regard, within the European Union, the countries of the regional partnership — the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia and my country, Austria — presented concrete proposals with regard to security, economic development, decentralization and the protection of minorities and of religious sites. We are confident that they can contribute to progress in Kosovo.

International and regional efforts are essential if we are to contain and resolve the various conflicts in other regions of the world. The dramatic situation in Darfur highlights the need for better harmonization of the international efforts of the United Nations, the African Union, the EU, the League of Arab States, the United States and other actors. We will have to examine carefully the results of the current mission to Darfur of the new Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide and the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

Such missions and mechanisms are indeed the tools that the United Nations needs if it is to effectively address emerging crisis situations. Strengthening the rule of law, human rights, democratic participation and economic development will reduce the chance of conflicts within societies and among States turning violent. In order to be a credible player, the United Nations must be given the necessary institutional framework to enact effective strategies at all stages of a conflict.

Austria therefore welcomed the Secretary-General's call for reform, in particular his initiative to establish a High-Level Panel of eminent persons to propose specific measures for institutional innovation by the end of the year. I was happy to meet with the members of the Panel when it held its meeting in Austria earlier this year.

One item on the Panel's agenda is Security Council reform. Austria, like many other countries, is concerned about the growing gap between the Council's current composition on the one hand, and the changing political, economic and social reality of the community of nations on the other.

It is essential to enlarge and balance the membership of the Security Council, as well as to increase its transparency. In order for all peoples to identify with its decisions, we must ensure that the Security Council is a body that truly reflects the diversity of the world's cultures and regions by an improved representation of regions such as Africa, Asia and Latin America.

As you know, Sir, it is my personal vision that, in the longer term, the European Union should also be represented in the Security Council. I pointed out during the general debate last year that that would be the logical consequence of further European integration in the field of common foreign and security policy.

The United Nations has been at the centre of Austria's foreign policy since we became a Member after regaining our full independence in 1955. We have always strongly supported the principles and purposes of the United Nations, and we remain committed to the goals of the Charter.

Austria feels honoured and privileged to host one of the headquarters of the United Nations. This year, we celebrate the twenty-fifth anniversary of the opening of the Vienna International Centre, home to many United Nations institutions. The work of the International Atomic Energy Agency and the Preparatory Committee of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization with respect to nuclear non-proliferation; the work of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization on development cooperation; and the fight against the so-called uncivil society by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, contribute substantially to the international community's efforts to confront the world's new security threats.

In this spirit of full and honest commitment to the United Nations, I would like to recall that Austria is a candidate for a non-permanent seat on the Security Council for the term 2009-2010. Our candidature, announced over five years ago — in 1999 — is based on our willingness to contribute actively and constructively to the maintenance of international peace and security. We fully recognize the heavy responsibility which Security Council membership entails and we are ready to assume it.

Over the past 50 years, Austria has sought to contribute effectively to the work of the United Nations, in particular in the fields of peace and security, human rights, development, disarmament and international law. We are a significant contributor to United Nations peacekeeping operations and have traditionally been among the largest European troop contributors. Since 1963, over 50,000 Austrians have served in more than 50 United Nations missions worldwide.

Security, as we see it, means human security. It is the kind of security that all human beings are looking for, among them millions of civilians in all parts of the world affected by armed conflict — the majority of them women and children — and 40 million people living with the HIV virus. Human security transcends the concept of hard threats and soft threats. If we see those threats through the prism of the human beings concerned, it becomes clear that for the afflicted individual, all such threats — war, hunger, terrorism or deadly disease — deprive them of their security.

Austria is honoured to chair the first Review Conference of States Parties to the Anti-personnel Mine-Ban Convention in Nairobi later this year, where the international community will chart a course for the solution of the landmine problem in the coming years. The Mine-Ban Convention has become a true example of a successful and effective multilateral approach to address a global problem. I encourage all States to participate at the Nairobi Summit at the highest possible level.

As a member of the Human Security Network, we cooperate with others to promote human security in the world. To provide one concrete example, Austria — together with Slovenia and Jordan — initiated and funded an aid project for traumatized children in Iraq. I am convinced that applying a human security perspective to international problems has the potential of preventing or resolving conflict and promoting peace and development.

We also need to reflect further on how best to ensure respect for human rights during conflict, how to incorporate human rights into preventive policies and how to formulate post-conflict strategies likely to achieve lasting reconciliation and build a firm basis for the rule of law and good governance. In that respect, human rights education is an important element in getting to the root of conflict and breaking the vicious circle of human rights violations.

Violence between ethnic groups and religious communities has shaken countries across the globe. In particular, the disregard for the needs and the rights of minorities tends to fuel violent conflict. Our endeavours for the protection of the rights of minorities are still highly needed, not the least to ensure that ethnic cleansing or genocide will never happen again. We know that the Secretary-General feels very strongly about the need for speed of action to prevent the most heinous crimes. I share his concerns.

The Austrian Government is convinced that it is an essential responsibility of the United Nations and its Member States to address the root causes of conflict. Global poverty, inequality, competition for scarce resources, environmental degradation and the spread of infectious diseases, such as HIV/AIDS, are among the ingredients that fuel the outbreak of conflicts both within countries and among States.

The Austrian Development Policy has placed a particular focus on poverty reduction, maintenance of peace and the protection of the environment. I am pleased to inform the Assembly that Austria has increased its development aid by 35 per cent this year. In the area of environment and sustainable energy, we have initiated and promoted the Global Forum for Sustainable Energy, which aims at providing access to energy for people in developing countries. We consider issues such as climate change, the decline of biodiversity and other forms of environmental degradation as essential aspects of our comprehensive security agenda.

Let me finally highlight an issue which the Secretary-General made a central theme of his address to the General Assembly. The key guarantee for creating and maintaining peace and security in the world has been and will continue to be an international system based on the rule of law. This was the very idea of the founders of the United Nations.

I particularly welcome the Secretary-General's pledge two days ago that he will make the United Nations work to strengthen the rule of law and transitional justice in conflict and post-conflict societies a priority for the remainder of his tenure. Particularly for smaller and medium sized countries, an international order based on the rule of law is of paramount importance.

With this in mind, I would like to announce today that I have launched a discourse on the role and function of the Security Council in strengthening a rules-based international system. As a first step, we will organize in November a panel of international legal experts during International Law Week at Headquarters, which will analyse the increasing law-making tendency of the Security Council.

This is my last speech as Austrian Foreign Minister. As you may know, I have been nominated Commissioner of the European Union for External Relations and European Neighbourhood Policy. This function will, of course, keep me in close contact with many Assembly delegates and with the United Nations. I would therefore like to use this opportunity today to thank all colleagues, members of delegations and, in particular, the Secretariat, in which I myself had the honour to work, for the support that has been extended to me and my staff here in New York over the past years. A special and warm expression of gratitude and respect goes to Secretary-General Kofi Annan. To the President of the Assembly, I would like to extend my best wishes for a successful and constructive fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Sergey Lavrov, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation.

Mr. Lavrov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): I am addressing the Assembly today at a most difficult time for our country, when tears are still being shed by those who lost their children and loved ones during the horrific terrorist attack in the Russian city of Beslan. I would like from this rostrum to take this opportunity to express once again my gratitude to all those who have shown their solidarity with Russia in these tragic days. Our special thanks go to the States and international organizations that extended their helping hand to the victims and the bereaved families — to all those who have suffered from this outrage.

I am also addressing the Assembly at a moment of truth, when there cannot possibly be any doubt whatever remaining as to the true nature of international terrorism and the challenge it has flung down before the world community. With their actions throughout the world, the terrorists have once and for all placed themselves in opposition to civilized mankind. In fact, having made the mass murder of people an end in itself, they have knowingly violated all norms of human morality.

Russia has drawn harsh conclusions. They have been set forth in the 4 and 13 September addresses by the President of the Russian Federation, Vladimir V. Putin. We will not allow anyone to encroach on the sovereignty of our State. We will resolutely strengthen the unity of the country and its people in order to counter terror and to guarantee a secure and decent life for our citizens in freedom and democracy.

The measures announced by the Russian President to achieve these objectives will be implemented on the basis of our country's Constitution; and we will continue to defend our legitimate interests throughout the world, not through confrontation, but by means of equitable dialogue, cooperation and partnership. Moreover, a readiness to engage in honest cooperation in fighting terrorism without double standards, is becoming one of the key criteria in our relations with any and all States.

We must enter into a qualitatively new and critical stage in the activities of the anti-terrorist coalition. The meeting of the Security Council of 1 September demonstrated the strong determination of the international community to continue its fight against terrorism in a consistent way. It is important now to translate this commitment into practical actions as quickly as possible.

In the three years that have passed since the terrorist attacks in New York City and Washington, a lot has been done to develop effective partnership in this sphere. However, compared to the scale of the threat, far from enough has been done. It is important to learn lessons from the experience gained and to draw conclusions for the future.

First, the global nature of the terrorist threat testifies to the fact that security in today's world is indivisible. Consequently, only collective responsibility can make the world secure. The fight against terrorism should unite States rather than pit them against each other. We can deal with this evil only on a multilateral basis by combining our efforts and acting in the spirit of solidarity. As President Putin has declared, Russia considers the objective of strengthening the anti-terrorist coalition to be one of our most important tasks.

A special emphasis here should be placed on intensifying the cooperation among our special services, which, we are convinced, must now be raised to a qualitatively new level of trust and coordinated action.

Secondly, a clear strategy and a generally acceptable legal framework are the prerequisites for success in combating terrorism. Such a framework is enshrined in resolution 1373 (2001) and in other decisions of the Security Council. But now, additional efforts are needed. They include making necessary amendments to national legislation, acceding to international anti-terrorist conventions and finalizing new international counter-terrorism legal instruments.

In circumstances where international terrorism has declared war on our entire civilization, the determination of States to use their right of self-defence in conformity with Article 51 of the United Nations Charter is of particular importance. Of course international law is clearly not an inalterable dogma. The fight against terrorism calls for its development and improvement.

Thirdly, the time has come to renounce double standards once and for all when it comes to terror, regardless of the slogans in which it may be cloaked.

Those who slaughtered children in Beslan and hijacked aeroplanes to attack America are creatures of the same ilk.

Harbouring terrorists, their henchmen and their sponsors undermines unity and mutual trust among those that form part of the anti-terrorist front, serves as justification for the actions of terrorists and indeed encourages them to commit similar crimes in other countries. I would recall that United Nations decisions require States granting political asylum to carefully examine the personal records of each individual to make sure that he or she has no links to terrorism. Attempts to use the fight against terrorism in various geopolitical games are even more counterproductive and dangerous.

Fourth, the utter atrociousness of the recent terrorist attacks proves there is the need for reliable safeguards against terrorists gaining access to weapons of mass destruction. Russia is prepared for the closest kind of international partnership in that area. Our country was one of the sponsors of Security Council resolution 1540 (2004). It is a participant in the Proliferation Security Initiative and a co-sponsor of the Group of Eight (G-8) Action Plan on Non-Proliferation. Those initiatives are complementary and are designed to increase the effectiveness of the regime of the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, something which is especially relevant on the eve of the 2005 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT).

Fifth, drug trafficking is increasingly interwoven with terrorism. The drug flow from Afghanistan has acquired global significance. The implementation of a set of social, economic and law-enforcement measures both within and outside the borders of that country is now more urgent than ever. One of the key elements of that strategy lies in strengthening the existing anti-drug security belts and creating new ones.

Russia is making an important contribution towards resolving the drug problem, including through the formulation of specific legal, political and operational measures within the framework of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO). We are ready to coordinate actions with the Government of Afghanistan, and with the multinational and coalition forces operating in that country.

Sixth, international terrorists have neither nationality nor religion. In fact, it is specifically religion and national culture that, today as never before, require protection from the devastating impact of extremism of any kind. There is a need for respectful dialogue among various religions and civilizations. Russia, which is open both to the West and to the East, is ready to play its part in that process, which is intended to prevent a split in civilization.

Another pressing task today is the saving of world spiritual and cultural monuments from attacks by extremists. We deem it essential to establish cooperation in that area between the United Nations and its specialized agencies, primarily the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). Failing to act here — as well as standing by in silence at the desecration of memorials to Second World War heroes and victims and at attempts to rehabilitate fascists — can only play into the hands of those who wish to incite extremist trends in society.

Seventh, Russia believes that the United Nations must continue to play a pivotal role in uniting the efforts of the international community in its fight against terrorism. As Chair of the Security Council's Counter-Terrorism Committee (CTC), our country intends to actively contribute to speeding up the reform of that Committee. We propose drafting a new Security Council resolution that would ensure the most effective possible functioning of the CTC, so as to identify, in a timely manner, weak links in the anti-terrorism network and increase practical cooperation between the CTC and international and regional organizations, including the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), the CSTO and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization.

The CIS summit held recently in Astana, Kazakhstan, reaffirmed the strong potential of CIS regional structures in all areas, from anti-terrorist activities and ensuring collective security to intensifying economic integration.

Certainly, in an increasingly interdependent world, the war on terrorism cannot be considered in isolation from other pressing issues facing mankind. This is especially relevant to the settlement of conflicts, which for decades have been destabilizing the situation at the regional and global levels. Through its decisions, the General Assembly must promote a

Middle East settlement on the basis of commitments made by the parties under the road map. Yesterday, the Quartet of international mediators spoke out to that end.

The situation in Iraq is a source of serious concern. Russia is ready to render all possible assistance towards attaining a political settlement aimed at preserving Iraq's territorial integrity and ensuring its political sovereignty and a genuinely democratic post-war recovery. The search for national reconciliation within Iraq is of key significance; here, the Iraqis could be assisted by the holding of an international conference with the participation of all major Iraqi political forces, friendly States, Security Council members and the League of Arab States and other organizations.

We must remain vigilant with regard to Kosovo, which is a dangerous hotbed of tension. There is no room for complacency. We must work to ensure that universally recognized standards of human rights and the rights of national minorities are applied in the region. We also need to make full use of existing mechanisms for conflict settlement within the CIS.

Consolidating the peacemaking capacity of the international community is crucial to overcoming regional crises. A collective response to humanitarian crises, in particular those on the African continent, in full compliance with the United Nations Charter and in a spirit of partnership with regional structures, would leave no doubt that the Charter remains a universal basis for the effective solution of such problems.

The United Nations must continue to focus its attention on other global threats to security and sustainable development as well. Those include the eradication of poverty and illiteracy as a breeding ground for extremism. Annually, our country grants 1,000 scholarships to students from African countries. Russia has contributed $7.5 million to the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria and has provided bilateral humanitarian assistance to a number of African countries.

Among the challenges and threats is that of finding ways to bridge the gap between poor and rich States. Russia has been making its contribution there; between 1998 and 2002 it wrote off the debt of African countries equivalent to $11.2 billion.

Another challenge is ensuring environmental security. Here I would like to confirm that in accordance with the decision of President Vladimir V. Putin we are now engaged in serious consideration of ratification of the Kyoto Protocol.

The challenges also include preventing the transformation of outer space into a theatre of armed confrontation. Together with China, we are calling for the conclusion of a comprehensive agreement to that end. We call upon all countries with space capability to join in that initiative. There is also a growing need to elaborate a United Nations convention on outer space law.

A further challenge is the fight against gross violations of human rights, with a view to ensuring the security and dignity of the individual. The United Nations, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the Council of Europe and other organizations should not remain passive spectators when, in some countries, a considerable part of the population is deprived of citizenship and consequently of basic political, social and economic rights.

On Russia's initiative, the General Assembly, at its fifty-seventh and fifty-eighth sessions, adopted resolutions 57/145 and 58/16 respectively, on establishing, under the aegis of the United Nations, a comprehensive approach to countering new threats and challenges. The resolutions contain specific guidelines for bringing the international community closer to a new security model that would meet the global challenges of the twenty-first century.

Those are the lines along which the High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change, established by the Secretary-General, is organizing its work. We hope that its recommendations will pave the way for a genuine enhancement of the effectiveness of the United Nations. At the same time, reform of the Organization, and particularly of the Security Council, should be based on the broadest possible agreement and should not provoke the alienation of States.

The international community is undergoing a complex period in its establishment of a new system of international relations. It is already clear that this will be a long-term process with an uncertain future and one that, so far, is difficult to predict. At the same time, there is an enormous increase in the number of new unresolved problems and new dangerous challenges to security and the development of mankind. We still lack a collective strategy and universally applicable mechanisms for responding to those challenges. In fact, we have to constantly improvise and use makeshift means to ensure world stability.

A question arises as to whether we could soon find ourselves in a situation in which events start to go out of control. Is it not time for the international community to assume an active role in impacting upon global processes and taking targeted actions to establish a more secure and just world order? Russia is fully determined, together with other countries, to build such a world order and take its proper place therein as a free and democratic State.

More than half a century ago, the civilized world put aside all its disputes and differences and mobilized its efforts to counter the deadly threat of Nazi enslavement. The enemy that opposes us today is no less dangerous and no less merciless. Russia sincerely hopes that the forthcoming sixtieth anniversary of the end of World War II and the establishment of the United Nations will become a historic milestone on the path to a world order in which the twenty-first century sees the noble principles of peace, stability and development enshrined in the United Nations Charter hold sway.

The Acting President *(spoke in Spanish)*: I now call on His Excellency The Right Honourable Jack Straw, Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

Mr. Straw (United Kingdom): Mr. President, I offer my congratulations and those of my country on your election as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session.

Eighteen months ago, the United Nations faced divisions more serious than any since the Cuban missile crisis of October 1962. We all worried whether the strength and unity which we had built up since the end of the cold war could survive.

Then last year we watched, as Secretary-General Kofi Annan stood at his now famous fork in the road. In the year since, almost instinctively, we have decided to follow our Secretary-General's directions. This Organization has not been plunged, as some predicted, into paralysis; instead, I have felt a powerful if unspoken determination to make the United Nations work, and to work more effectively, to fulfil its central task: to secure peace around the world.

Over the last 12 months we have dealt with new crises such as that in Darfur in the Sudan, where we have set clear tasks for both the Sudanese Government and the rebel groups. We have tackled the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Great Lakes; mobilized international support for the new Iraq; and addressed a long list of hugely important subjects which rarely receive the coverage they should in the media — Haiti, Georgia, Timor-Leste, Bougainville and Western Sahara.

We have shown in those actions the unity of purpose which is one of the strongest weapons in our hands to defeat the evils which today affect the globe. And the search for consensus has not been confined to the Security Council.

I am proud that just a few months after the difficult times of early last year, France, Germany and the United Kingdom came together to work, as we continue to do, on the Iran dossier before the International Atomic Energy Agency.

I recognize, of course, the frustrations which all of us feel, not least over the Israel-Palestine conflict, where the clear path to peace set out in the road map and endorsed by the Security Council remains elusive. But all in all we have shown the will to make collective action work, though we know, too, that we need to go further.

In particular, we need to get better at tackling threats which have changed dramatically since the founding of the United Nations. Today the greatest threats to our security often come not from other functioning sovereign States, but from terrorist organizations, from failing States and from man-made shocks to our environment like climate change, which can exacerbate State failure and breed internal instability.

The High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change appointed by the Secretary-General is preparing its recommendations on ways to address the various challenges. We should remember in all this that we have one great advantage. Though its institutions and the founding text of the Charter has hardly changed in 60 years, the United Nations is not an organization set in stone, but a set of living institutions based on a shared will to make collective security work. The United Nations has adapted in the past — with the development of peacekeeping, a greater focus on individual rights and the setting of global targets for development — and I am confident that it can adapt in the future.

Of course, institutional change is part of that. At the United Nations foundation, one eighth of its members could expect to be elected members of the Security Council at any one time. Today that proportion is less than one eighteenth. The United Kingdom has long supported the case for expanding the Security Council to, say, 24 members, and for including amongst the permanent members: Germany and Japan, two countries which between them contribute 28 per cent of the budget of the United Nations; India, which represents one sixth of the entire world's population; and Brazil, which just missed permanent membership back in 1945.

But we should not see an expansion of the Security Council, or other institutional change, as a panacea. The biggest need is to adapt our common understanding — the United Nations jurisprudence, if you like — and its operational effectiveness so that we can respond more quickly and more thoroughly to today's new threats.

Let me highlight three areas which to me seem particularly important: first, our approach must be broader and must tackle threats to the most vulnerable, including poverty, disease and environmental degradation; secondly, we must build a new consensus by expanding the scope of collective action; and, thirdly, we must deal with the threat of terrorism, which menaces us all and everything for which we stand.

Let me now take these three points in turn. First, there is the need for a broader approach which addresses the complex and interdependent nature of security today. Here, we have to do more to meet the Millennium Development Goals and to promote sustainable development, especially in Africa. We cannot have security without development or development without security.

As the Secretary-General highlighted in his speech this week, we have to do more to entrench the rule of law and justice, especially in States recovering from conflict. The United Kingdom will pursue work on the Secretary-General's report during its Security Council presidency next month.

We could also use the United Nations better, to agree to monitor and help implement globally accepted norms of good governance.

And we need to act together quickly on climate change, perhaps the greatest long-term threat to our world in terms of stability and security. We have to implement Kyoto — and I greatly welcome what my colleague, His Excellency Sergey Lavrov had to say on that today — and agree to emission reductions beyond 2012.

My second point is the need to build a new consensus on the scope of collective action. We all represent independent, sovereign states. But even as we founded the United Nations we recognized that sovereignty was a trust in the hands of a nation's government: there to be respected, not abused, from either without or within.

The Charter set out arrangements so that an abuse from without could be dealt with through the inherent right of self-defence recognized in Article 51 of the Charter. But it also said that an abuse from within which threatens the peace could and should be dealt with by the Security Council, under the powers enshrined in the other articles of Chapter VII of the Charter, and by the many conventions concluded within the United Nations framework, including, for example, the 1948 Geneva Convention. No longer — we all said — could or should the world turn away from unspeakable barbarities like that of the Holocaust.

But we have not always lived up to those high expectations, as the tragedies of Rwanda and Bosnia ten years ago reminded us. Today we must resolve to do so and to engage in situations of humanitarian catastrophe or grave violations of international humanitarian law and to act in the face of other threats to international peace and security.

The principle of non-interference has to be qualified by a duty to protect, especially where Governments are failing in that duty.

We therefore need, for example, to be ready to support greater use by the Secretary-General of his powers under Article 99 of the Charter, to bring threats to peace to the Security Council's attention. We have to act quickly in response, because prevention is far better than cure. We should look to work more closely with regional organizations, as we are doing with the African Union in Darfur. We need more discussion on the criteria as to when the international community might have to intervene with military force in extreme circumstances. We must get better at engaging for the long term in countries recovering from conflict, coordinating our efforts in response to locally agreed priorities.

My third point is the urgent need to combat global terrorism, a menace directed at us all. If we have learned anything in the three years since 11 September 2001 it is that international terrorism is indiscriminate in its targets and merciless in its hatred. Christian, Jew, Hindu, Buddhist, Sikh, Muslim, people of no religion or any religion, and of every or no shade of political opinion, all have died through the terrorists' bullet or bomb.

My friend Sergey Lavrov spoke eloquently a moment ago about the tears still wet for the terrible, unspeakable massacre of the young and innocent that took place in Beslan. Sergey, your tears are my tears; Russia's tears are the world's tears. We are all in the fight against terrorism together.

Today in Iraq we are seeing again the depths to which the terrorists plumb. The vast majority of the victims of terrorism in Iraq are Iraqis. Our thoughts and condolences are with the Government and people of Iraq and with their families. But some of the victims of terrorism in Iraq are foreigners who are helping Iraqis to build a more stable and prosperous country. One of them is Kenneth Bigley, a British engineer held hostage by terrorists who have already barbarically murdered his two American comrades. Our thoughts and prayers are with their families. We continue to do all we can to secure Mr. Bigley's release.

I know — how could I forget — that opinions have differed over the rightness of the military action taken in Iraq 18 months ago. But I warrant that no nation is in favour of the terrorist insurgency now occurring there. For we all recognize that what is being attempted by the terrorists in Iraq is an attack both on the Iraqi people and on everything for which the Organization stands: safety, security and human rights. We have to come together to defeat the terrorists and their despicable aims.

The threat of terrorism confronts democratic, properly functioning States with an acute dilemma, namely, how to fight those who recognize none of the values for which we stand while remaining true to those values. Our commitments under international conventions express many of those values and the importance that we attach to them. But equally, those conventions cannot be allowed to shelter those involved in terrorism. The conventions were designed to protect citizens from abuse by States, not by terrorists.

The 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees protects those with a well-founded fear of persecution. I am proud that the United Kingdom and so many other nations have offered that protection when and where it was required. But as the 1951 Convention itself sets out, asylum is not an unqualified right. It does not apply to anyone who has committed a war crime, a crime against humanity or other serious crime; nor does it apply to anyone who is guilty of acts contrary to the purposes and principles of the United Nations.

We must never stoop to the level of the terrorist — to torture, mistreatment or unjustified incarceration — nor will any country within the European Union be party to the return of suspects to such conditions, nor to face the death penalty. But we cannot let terrorists exploit a protection designed for the persecuted, not the persecutors. We in the United Kingdom shall therefore be working closely with Russia on its important draft Security Council resolution, to see how best we can prevent those who commit, support and finance terrorism from sheltering behind a refugee status to which they are not entitled. Along with the Russian Federation and other partners in the Security Council, we also wish to look at ways to ensure the speedier extradition of such individuals.

We, the United Nations, have over the last year begun to show a new determination to come together and to make collective action work. A year from now, we will meet again here to review the recommendations of the High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change, as well as the Millennium Development Goals, and to set the United Nations agenda for the next decade. The United Kingdom's chairmanship of the G-8 next year will focus on tackling climate change and on Africa, on which the Independent Commission for Africa will be producing recommendations as to how best we can support the radical agenda for change and development designed by Africa itself through the New Partnership for Africa's Development and the African Union. Our presidency of the European Union will help us to lead efforts for a successful outcome in the Doha Development Round, and for building the European Union's crisis-management capabilities.

More than ever, global security is our shared responsibility. In the year ahead, as we continue to adapt to today's threats and challenges, we must find renewed determination and political will to make collective security work. The United Kingdom is determined to play its full part in that endeavour.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Brian Cowen, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ireland.

Mr. Cowen (Ireland): I first addressed the General Assembly in the year 2000. The millennium year was a time of great hope, reflected in the outcome of the Millennium Summit. World leaders committed the peoples of the planet to a new beginning in which the dawn of the twenty-first century would mark a break from the past, with a new sharing of burdens, and a new common dedication to peace and human progress.

Today the light of that new dawn is obscured by the dark clouds of war, terror, ethnic violence and continuing abuse of human rights. Twelve months ago and again this week, the Secretary-General pointed out that the Organization is at a fork in the road and that we have to decide on the way forward. Much work has been undertaken since the Secretary-General laid down that challenge. The High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change is working on its report. I am pleased to recall that the European Union (EU) made a detailed submission to the Panel, drawn up during Ireland's recent presidency of the Union. We also took a decision to mainstream the issue of effective multilateralism in the Union's discussions with other regional groups.

We await the Panel's report and the Secretary-General's recommendations that will follow. In his address on Tuesday, the Secretary-General expressed the hope that when the heads of State and Government meet next year to review progress on the Millennium Declaration they will be ready to take bold decisions. They must, because the longer we linger at the fork in the road, the more difficult will be the road ahead.

We cannot afford to postpone action. More and more citizens of the world are questioning whether the United Nations has the capacity, or even the will, to prevent conflict and protect the vulnerable from injustice. They are becoming increasingly disillusioned with an Organization which either cannot take decisions or whose decisions are ignored with impunity. They see the politics of the lowest common denominator in operation, with strong and sensible draft resolutions watered down to mere platitudes. They hear the United Nations being denigrated by those who make a virtue of their determination to put national interests above all other considerations. They fear that the Organization is no longer driven by the determination and idealism of the founding fathers.

My Prime Minister, Taoiseach Bertie Ahern, made clear last year, when he addressed the General Assembly, where the fault lies. It lies with us, the Governments of the Member States. We have a strong and much respected Secretary-General in Kofi Annan. We have brave and dedicated officials. Many have put their lives on the line for the Organization and what it stands for. Some have made the ultimate sacrifice. United Nations staff deserve better protection in the future.

It is time for the Governments of Member States to act. We need, as the Secretary-General put it, to seek common solutions to common problems. That will require political will and effective structures. Neither one on its own will suffice. The essential requirement is a more effective system of collective security. Such a system requires the unique legitimacy offered by an effective United Nations and its Charter.

It is clear that the composition of the Security Council no longer accurately reflects global geopolitical realities. In Ireland's view, a modest and regionally balanced increase in its membership, both in the permanent and non-permanent categories, is justified. Increased representation from the developing world would enhance its legitimacy, and thereby its effectiveness.

But a more effective Security Council will need more than a change in structures. There has to be a change in attitudes. Those States that sit on the Security Council have a responsibility to rise above national or regional interests and act in the wider interests of mankind. That is an obligation that rests on each and every member of the Council. But those who either assert or aspire to positions of world leadership — and there is no shortage of candidates — bear a particular responsibility to act in the global interest.

Putting national interests first is not an effective answer to the challenges that confront us. It may be a cliché to say that our planet is shrinking, but that does not make it any less true. While most of us continue to wish to organize and govern ourselves primarily within the framework of the nation-State, we must recognize that technological development and economic integration are impairing the effectiveness of the nation-State as a defensive bastion.

Power and influence must be used in the interests of the international community as a whole, rather than for the pursuit of narrow, short-term interests. States and regions have broad and varied interests, both individual and collective. Our system must accommodate and reconcile those interests. Otherwise we are doomed to division between those who would impose hegemony and those who would resist it.

In his report on the implementation of the Millennium Declaration, the Secretary-General has warned that the world is falling short in its performance towards the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. In sub-Saharan Africa especially, many countries are caught in a poverty trap and face the crippling challenges of unsustainable debt and HIV/AIDS, often compounded by instability.

Ireland fully recognizes the seriousness of the shortfall in development funding that faces us, which is presently estimated at €50 billion per year. The best means of bridging that gap is for donor nations to recommit themselves to reaching the United Nations target for official development assistance of 0.7 per cent of gross national product. The Irish Government remains committed to that goal. Ireland, which has increased its official development assistance very substantially in recent years, will continue working actively with its developing country partners to build a strong global partnership for development.

Economic and social development is the means by which the world's poorer countries can be lifted out of poverty. An open international trading regime aimed at facilitating investment is an integral part of our multilateral system, and fair market access is an essential part of that. Some developing countries estimate that, in a best-case scenario, a successful outcome to the Doha Round could help raise up to 500 million people out of extreme poverty. Fairer international trading arrangements are imperative if we are to address the problems of underdevelopment. Ireland and its European Union partners are determined not to be found wanting in the task of bringing the Doha Round of multilateral trade negotiations, finally, to a conclusion, with an agreement that meets the essential concerns of all sides.

Over the past year we have once again seen that the failure of State institutions is a major source of conflict and human misery. The responsibility for protecting people from conflict and the effects of conflict, and from humanitarian catastrophe, lies primarily with the Governments concerned. However, it has been well demonstrated that events within a particular country can threaten international peace and security and spread misery far beyond its borders. Where Governments are unable or unwilling to take the necessary steps to prevent catastrophe in their own country, I believe that the international community has responsibilities to protect in those circumstances.

It is increasingly evident that instability very frequently arises from situations where human rights are abused or denied. The abuse of human rights is also at the root of poverty and underdevelopment. Respect for human rights, on the other hand, is an essential element of good governance, and must be at the centre of efforts to prevent conflict, and of post-conflict reconstruction. Presently, 40 per cent of conflicts that appear to have been resolved break out again within five years. We simply must do better in identifying emerging problems sooner. We also need to put in place policies and structures that are effective within a new, enforceable legal framework.

I hope, therefore, that the High-level Panel will address the serious questions involved in international intervention, and put forward recommendations that will act as a basis for consensus. We trust that they will also give full and careful consideration to the policies and structures that we need in order to carry out our responsibilities towards States and societies at risk of instability. Any such structures must facilitate a sustained engagement with those States, to ensure that they receive whatever assistance is needed — political, humanitarian and economic — to avert instability or a return to conflict. In addressing those problems on the basis of the report of the High-level Panel, let us not sacrifice substance on the altar of process.

Ireland welcomes the increasing role of regional and subregional organizations in crisis management, under the overall authority of the Security Council. The European Union is engaged in developing its role in conflict prevention and crisis management, while fully recognizing the central role and authority of the United Nations. I am pleased to state that during Ireland's recent presidency of the European Union, important progress was achieved in implementing the Joint Declaration on United Nations-European Union Cooperation in Crisis Management. It was agreed in

June, during our presidency, that the European Union will make a rapid response capability available, and at the service of the United Nations. That will take effect on an initial basis in 2005, with the full complement of 1,500 troops being ready and available by 2007.

The efforts of the African Union and the Economic Community of West African States in crisis management have been particularly valuable and deserve support. The African Union's involvement in Darfur, where it currently has 120 monitors with a protection force of 300, is an extremely positive development. It is fully supported by the European Union, including through the African Peace Facility, established during Ireland's recent presidency of the Union. The African Union is planning to augment its contingent in Sudan, where it is estimated that a force of at least 5,000 may be necessary to assure a secure environment for the people of Darfur. The European Union is ready to increase its backing for the African Union's effort accordingly.

Whatever political difficulties may have arisen in Darfur, the people there did not deserve to suffer massacre, rape and famine, or to see their villages and crops destroyed and their livestock driven off. When the depredations of the ruthless militias were unleashed upon them, they looked in vain for the even-handed protection of their Government.

I want to recognize the efforts of United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations — including Irish organizations such as GOAL, Concern and Trócaire — that responded so quickly and generously to the humanitarian crisis in Darfur. The dedication of humanitarian aid workers must also be applauded.

The humanitarian needs in Darfur still remain immense. I appeal for continued support from the international community to meet the funding shortfall. Ireland has contributed almost €6 million in Government-funded aid so far this year to assist the humanitarian effort there through United Nations agencies as well as through Irish and international non-governmental organizations. The Irish people have been greatly moved by the suffering in Darfur and have been generous in providing additional, non-government financial support for the relief effort.

I also wish to pay tribute to the leadership of the Secretary-General in insisting on an appropriate response from the Security Council. I welcome the recent adoption by the Security Council of resolution 1564 (2004), although it is a matter of regret and bewilderment to many that the resolution did not receive the unanimous backing of Council members. I hope that the Council will now unite in seeking to assert its will and bring an end to a situation that is an affront to humanity.

I urge the authorities in the Sudan to fulfil, with the utmost urgency, the obligations that have been imposed on them by the Security Council. They must cooperate closely with the monitors deployed by the African Union. They must ensure that the Janjaweed militia are brought under control and disarmed and that persons responsible for crimes and serious violations of human rights are brought to justice. And they must ensure that secure conditions are restored so that people can return voluntarily to their homes. I also urge all parties in the Abuja talks, including the rebel groups, to show flexibility and goodwill so that the underlying problems of Darfur can be resolved in a peaceful manner.

Once again, we meet in the General Assembly Hall under the shadow of terrorism. The recent appalling images from Beslan provide a further emphatic demonstration of the moral bankruptcy of terrorism. The fact that those attacks targeted innocent children, along with the consequent trauma caused to children worldwide who saw the torn bodies of the children and mothers of Beslan on their television screens, make them all the more heinous. They reinforce, if reinforcement were needed, the absolute duty of Member States of the United Nations to cooperate effectively in identifying and bringing to justice those who plan, direct, finance, facilitate and carry out terrorist acts.

Terrorist acts are always reprehensible, and those who carry them out bear full responsibility for them. That is true irrespective of any underlying factors that might exist, such as national or civil conflict or oppressive economic or social conditions. We must show determination to confront and face down terrorists when they test our resolve through their involvement in heinous acts of violence designed to terrorize the public into conceding to their distorted view of the world. But we also have to be smart to win.

Terrorism can rarely be defeated by exclusively military or security means, although those means are obviously a very necessary component in the fight against terrorism. It is necessary, at the same time, to address the root causes of terrorism. I made that point when I addressed the General Assembly in the aftermath of the atrocities of 11 September, and I make no apologies for repeating it today. Let there be no misunderstanding. I offer no excuses for terrorism. Terrorism is evil. But it is my strong belief that people are not born evil. At a certain point in their lives, something — perhaps a particular event or the experience of indoctrination — causes them to embrace evil. To seek to address that root cause is not to be soft on terrorism, it is the intelligent way to attack terrorism.

Terrorism tests the effectiveness of our national and collective security systems, but it also tests the quality of our institutions, including our systems of justice, and the strength of our values. As we seek to protect ourselves, we must ensure that those institutions remain strong, that democratic values are not undermined, that our systems of justice are not compromised and that our struggle is conducted in full respect for international law and human rights norms. If we fail to do that, any success we achieve over terrorists will be at the expense of the way of life we seek to protect.

The people of Israel and Palestine continue to suffer from violence that is as futile as it is tragic. The root cause of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is a struggle over land. The land must be shared by agreement arrived at through negotiation between the parties to the conflict. The continuing unilateral expansion of settlements and the construction and maintenance of the separation barrier on the West Bank will make the conflict more difficult to resolve. The entire international community — particularly Israel's friends — need to send that clear and unambiguous message to the Israeli Government and the people of Israel.

Ireland acknowledges the right, indeed the responsibility, of the Israeli Government to protect its people, including, if it so wishes, by a security fence along its recognized borders. However, the building of the fence in the West Bank serves to divide Palestinian communities and creates severe hardship for them. It will also serve to perpetuate the so-called facts on the ground, and make it more difficult to reach a final settlement. The advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice has given clear guidance on the fence that should be given careful consideration by those whose policies and actions it addresses.

The Palestinian Authority must also assume its responsibilities under the road map, notwithstanding the difficulties it faces. Effective and responsible leadership is required. The Palestinian people can best achieve their sovereignty by restoring national discipline and rejecting the path of violence.

Ireland, in common with its EU partners, continues to believe that the only way to reach a comprehensive settlement of the conflict is through the Quartet road map. In the Tullamore Declaration, issued during Ireland's recent presidency of the European Union, EU ministers welcomed the expressed intention of Prime Minister Sharon to withdraw from Gaza and acknowledged the impetus that such a withdrawal could give to the peace process, as long as it met certain conditions, including that it take place in the context of the implementation of the road map.

I therefore urge Israel and the Palestinian Authority to cooperate closely with the Quartet to ensure that the withdrawal from Gaza is accompanied by the full and effective assumption by the Palestinian Authority of its responsibilities in the territory, and that a momentum towards the full implementation of the road map is developed.

The passage of Security Council resolution 1546 (2004) and the subsequent establishment of the Interim Government of Iraq, represented a crucial coming together by the international community on the importance of reconstruction in Iraq. It is vital that that Government should be able to move ahead and establish a full democratic mandate. However, the security situation in Iraq remains a matter of grave concern to us all, and the challenges facing the new Government are great. An end to the lethal violence that is disrupting the normal development of that country is essential.

Ireland has always seen the role of the United Nations as central to the issue of reconstructing Iraq. We therefore welcome the forthcoming return of the United Nations mission. Ireland and its EU partners will seek to ensure that that mission is provided with the necessary security to allow it to carry out its functions.

The Irish and British Governments continue to work in close partnership to consolidate peace and political stability in Northern Ireland. Since the Good Friday Agreement of 1998, considerable progress has been made in improving and normalizing life in

Northern Ireland. In our view, the complete implementation of the Good Friday Agreement remains definitively the best way forward.

The elections to the Northern Ireland Assembly last November gave leadership mandates to the Sinn Fein party and the Democratic Unionist Party in their respective nationalist and unionist communities. Since then, both Governments have engaged in intensive discussions with all the parties to finally resolve the key issues of confidence that have thus far frustrated the full achievement of peace and political stability in Northern Ireland. Those key issues include ending paramilitary activity in all its forms; completing the process of decommissioning Irish Republican Army weapons; the implementation by the British Government of the agreed programme of normalization and demilitarization; ensuring that the new policing service is supported by all sections of the community and resolving the related issue of the devolution of justice and policing powers; and obtaining commitments from all parties to fully participate in the institutions of the Agreement.

Those were the issues that were addressed in three days of intensive talks that were convened by both Governments in Leeds Castle in England last week. Substantial progress was made in the talks regarding the issues of paramilitarism and arms decommissioning. As Prime Minister Blair said after the talks, the contours of the paramilitary question are now in sight of being resolved, to be accompanied by subsequent demilitarization, as agreed in the joint declaration issued by the British and Irish Governments last October. In addition, significant progress was made with regard to the policing issue and the devolution of those powers to devolved institutions in Northern Ireland.

Regrettably, it was not possible to achieve agreement among the parties themselves on the question of the operation of the political institutions of the Agreement. Talks are continuing in Belfast this week to see if the gaps between the parties on that issue can be resolved. The gaps are narrow and can, and must, be overcome at the earliest possible date. It was noteworthy in that regard that the leader of the Democratic Unionist Party, Mr. Ian Paisley, made the point immediately after the talks that a golden opportunity has been available to realize a stable and entirely peaceful future. For our part, the Irish Government is open to considering changes that would improve the workings of the institutions while maintaining compliance with the fundamentals of the Agreement, and we have brought forward proposals in that regard. But, I reiterate, as the Taoiseach emphasized last weekend, such changes must not disturb the fundamental balance of the Good Friday Agreement, in particular its key power-sharing provisions.

The resolution of those institutional questions would allow both Governments to bring forward a comprehensive package providing a template for political stability in Northern Ireland. It would be a tragedy if the failure to bridge the remaining gaps on that institutional matter frustrated the goal of definitively removing the issue of arms from politics in Northern Ireland. The people, rightly, would not understand why that long-awaited prize was denied because of a reluctance to fully embrace the structures of partnership and power-sharing.

If, on the other hand, those institutional issues can be resolved and a comprehensive agreement then brought forward, we can finally liberate partnership politics in Northern Ireland and allow its committed and talented politicians — from all sides of the community — to collectively get on with the job of providing better governance, a prospering economy and a fair society for all of the people.

I will conclude where I began, on the need to rededicate ourselves to the reinvigoration of this great Organization.

Next year will be a year in which important decisions on the future of the United Nations must be taken. We need to rededicate ourselves to the principles and purposes for which this Organization was founded. We need to restore the sense of ambition and idealism that illuminated the United Nations at its inception. We need, above all, to build an Organization that is results-oriented and that can demonstrate that politics is the most effective means of resolving conflict. Let us make 2005 the year in which the United Nations is reborn strong, effective and respected, as the founding fathers intended it to be.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Mustafa Osman Ismail, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of the Sudan.

Mr. Ismail (Sudan) (*spoke in Arabic*): It gives me pleasure to extend my delegation's sincere congratulations to Mr. Jean Ping on his deserved election to the presidency of the fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly. Given the issues that we must consider during this session, and in view of the important tasks we must face in the coming year, we particularly welcome the President's experience and skills, which are familiar to us in the African arena.

We would also like to extend our thanks and appreciation to Mr. Julian R. Hunte, the outgoing President, for the great efforts he made in conducting the work of the Assembly, as well as to the Secretary-General for leading the work of the Organization.

Last year from this rostrum I stated that negotiations between the Government and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army, under the auspices of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and Kenya's chairmanship, and with the support of the IGAD partners, had made great progress and peace had become imminent. I am glad to say that the last round of negotiations resulted in the signing, in the first week of June 2004, of six protocols dealing with security arrangements, cessation of hostilities, distribution of wealth, power-sharing and the conflict in the Nubian mountains region, the Blue Nile and Abiai. We decided to hold the last round of negotiations on 7 October 2004 to complete the details of a comprehensive peace, which will, it is hoped, be signed at the end of this year.

We stand on the threshold of peace. The new challenge before us now is to overcome the differences of the past, start reconstruction and rehabilitation, concentrate on development and strengthen the pillars of peace and national unity on the basis of compatriotism and equality of rights and duties. For that reason, my Government declares its firm intention of conducting a national dialogue with all political forces, inside and outside the Sudan, in order to make peace a national objective that can be achieved through a national charter.

It also gives me pleasure to say that in addition to the talks in Naivasha and Abuja my Government started a third forum in Cairo, under the auspices of the Egyptian Government, to engage in dialogue with factions of the national opposition, headquartered in Asmara.

Because war has devastated all sectors of the country, reconstruction efforts are especially difficult. We would like to express our appreciation to the international community for the humanitarian assistance they provided during the war. We now appeal to the international community to help in the reconstruction process: to ameliorate the living conditions in the areas devastated by war all over the Sudan; to aid in the resettlement of internally displaced persons and refugees; and to participate in development projects in order to achieve peace and stability.

We were at the threshold of peace in the south when another war broke out in Darfur as the result of a rebel movement begun by some tribes and supported by foreign forces. The rebel movement's terrorist action was not directed against the Government only, but against those tribes that refused to join them. That, in turn, pushed those tribes to train and arm militias to defend themselves against the rebels. The rebel movement targeted the security apparatus, sowing death and destruction, which led to the release of criminal Janjaweed groups from prisons. The aggression continued against civilians and Government institutions.

The root causes of Darfur go back to conflicts among the tribal communities in the region. Previously, those conflicts were settled according to traditional customs and norms. But the growth in population and the number of livestock, coupled with a decrease in the water supply owing to desertification, led to tense struggles between grazing land tribes and farmers. There were other causes for regional conflict: an influx of arms and the interference of neighbouring countries that tried to exploit the tense situation, encouraging rebellions against the Government by training and arming certain groups.

The present conflict in Darfur started in March 2003, when rebels started inciting dissension and strife, attacking highways, plundering livestock and taking international relief workers as hostages. The Government tried to convince them to abandon military action, but they insisted on occupying cities and villages and terrorizing tribes, forcing them into armed service. Everyone had to carry weapons for self-defence. Then, the Government intervened to try to halt the hostilities, impose law and order and prevent civil war.

This conflict, which was imposed on the Government, has created extremely complicated and dire humanitarian conditions. The Government took the necessary measures. It sent food relief to Darfur. Next, it eliminated all the administrative, legal and technical arrangements that impeded relief work, it allowed relief organizations to enter Darfur unimpeded, and it curtailed certain regulations, such as visa requirements, in order to provide protection to camps of displaced persons. The Government deployed police and reopened legal offices destroyed by the rebels. The process of bringing all of those accused of violating human rights to justice began. Furthermore, the Government cooperated with the international community by signing a joint communiqué with the Secretary-General that includes a number of measures to deal with the situation in Darfur and, together with Jan Pronk, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Sudan, I headed a Joint Implementation Mechanism mission to the area.

Furthermore, out of its belief in a peaceful settlement as a strategic choice, the Government entered into negotiations with the rebels under the auspices of the President of Chad, which culminated in the Abashi agreement in 2003, but that agreement was later violated by the rebels. However, this did not weaken the Government's resolve to continue its efforts, until we attained the ceasefire agreement in N'Djamena. In order to cooperate with the African Union, we sent a high-level delegation to the first round of negotiations at Addis Ababa; our delegation was given full authority to reach a peaceful settlement with the rebels. But the rebels boycotted the talks.

The Government redoubled its efforts at all levels — political, security and humanitarian — out of its responsibility for the people, and it cooperated fully with the United Nations so as to implement the agreement that had been reached with the Secretary-General. Then, on 30 July 2004, the Security Council adopted resolution 1556 (2004), which gave the Government only one month to deal with the problem and threatened the imposition of sanctions. It is regrettable that this resolution sent an erroneous message, thus encouraging the rebels to give up negotiations with good intention. They insisted on conditions that were impossible to implement. And this led to the collapse of negotiations in Addis Ababa, in spite of the African Union's great efforts.

Notwithstanding the faults and impracticality of this Security Council resolution, my Government, abiding by its international legitimacy and responsibility for its people, will continue to do its utmost to find the shortest way for the return of peace, stability and security to Darfur. My Government signed a working plan for Darfur with the United Nations; this plan included detailed arrangements for humanitarian aid, security and protection of displaced persons and their voluntary return. We assigned extra police forces, numbering 10,000. We also signed an agreement with the International Organization for Migration on the return of refugees.

Within the framework of a political settlement, and despite the intransigence and lack of seriousness of the rebels, my Government accepted the invitation extended by President Obasanjo of Nigeria, the current Chairman of the African Union. We then sent another high-ranking delegation to Abuja on 23 August out of our belief in the political settlement as a strategic option. As it happened in the Addis Ababa negotiations, the Security Council adopted its resolution 1564 (2004) last Saturday, 18 September, which gave more incentive to the rebels and sent them an erroneous message to continue their intransigence. This led to the failure of the negotiations.

Security Council resolution 1564 (2004) did not consider my Government's efforts to contain the humanitarian crisis in Darfur, which led to détente in the situation. It did not pay attention to my Government's warning about the negative impact of any measures that would hamper the efforts made by the African Union for the peaceful settlement of the question of Darfur.

We call upon the international community to provide assistance to the needy population in Darfur. At the same time, we ask for support and promotion of the African Union's efforts and that the situation on the ground not be further complicated or the Union's efforts undermined.

Believing in our own principles, our sense of responsibility and the attention my Government attaches to human rights questions, we have cooperated with international and voluntary organizations for the development and enhancement of human rights in my country. We have ratified this year the African Children's Initiative and, over the past months, we have received some independent experts and special rapporteurs sent by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). In cooperation with OHCHR, we have deployed a team of human rights observers in Darfur. Sudan's doors will be open for all those who want to know the truth. We have nothing to hide. Our efforts were not limited to cooperating with the international community. We have taken some measures at the local level, and we have established a national independent committee to investigate allegations of human rights violations in Darfur. Also, there are other committees to investigate the other claims of rape in the Darfur region besides our efforts to provide protection, peace and security to our citizens.

Since the beginning of the crisis, my Government has not hesitated to recognize that there has been a humanitarian problem in Darfur and a security problem that ought to be dealt with through a comprehensive political solution, despite the fact that the rebel movement led to this problem by starting violence and fighting. Then we resorted to the international community in general and the African Union and the League of Arab States in particular.

We hope that the international community, especially the Security Council, will cooperate with us to find a solution instead of issuing threats and condemnations. The last Security Council resolution is a living example of such threats.

We welcome the international community's investigation of the Darfur violations. As I said, we have nothing to hide. What we all want from the Secretary-General, who is responsible for the establishment of this committee, and from the Security Council is confirmation of the credibility of the international organization so that this international committee would be neutral and professional. We do not want a committee like that headed by Richard Butler, who prepared his report at another location where it was signed and submitted to the Security Council indicating that it represented the position of the Organization.

We hope that the voices of those who took certain positions regarding Darfur will be silent until the international committee's report is issued. We face a very delicate situation and developments in the world today, and we need to face such challenges by garnering the political will to enhance the role of the United Nations and its agencies in order to carry out their functions within the framework of a real democracy that would express the interests and hopes of all peoples and confront the challenges of the twenty-first century.

We must accelerate our current efforts that have been going on for a decade now for Security Council reform and to develop its methods of work. The body that is responsible for international peace and security is composed of permanent members, whose monopoly of the veto reflects a great imbalance over the simplest criteria of justice. Among the five permanent Members, there are three from one geographical group; two of them are from Western Europe. There is no representation whatsoever for entire continents, such as Africa or Latin America, and vast regions of Asia. Therefore, any discussion about submitting another candidate from Western Europe before taking these continents into consideration would be a consecration of this imbalanced equation and of the West's hegemony over the affairs of this Organization.

Terrorism and extremism are among the challenges facing the world today. We declare our total rejection and condemnation of this destructive phenomenon; but at the same time there is an unacceptable misunderstanding and confusion between terrorism and the struggles of people to achieve their independence and to rid themselves of foreign occupation. This misunderstanding culminates in the extreme when terrorism is linked to followers of a certain religion or culture. Terrorism has no religion or homeland. We stand with the international community and cooperate with it in its fight to eliminate terrorism, and we call for an international agreement on a definition of terrorism and to find the best means to face this plague through collective efforts.

The gap between the rich and poor countries is widening within a system of globalization that further enriches the wealthy and impoverishes the poor. It has become an obstacle for the international community and the aspirations to a free and dignified life of billions of people in developing countries. The imbalance in today's world economy and free trade is obvious. It will have an adverse effect not only on the developing countries but will lead also to total catastrophe in the whole world. We need to have political resolve, as stated by world leaders in the Millennium Declaration four years ago, and later at Monterrey and Johannesburg.

Developing and least developed countries are still suffering from hunger and poverty.

Let us renew hope for the hundreds of millions of poor and hungry people by translating that political will into concrete action in order to provide them with education and drinking water and to eliminate hunger, destitution and disease by focusing on the goals and programmes that we have repeatedly agreed on. In this connection, we would like to pay tribute to the international initiative on the new Action Against Hunger and Poverty.

Israel's oppressive policies against unarmed Palestinian people, the imposition of closures on occupied Palestinian land, the extrajudicial crimes committed there, the demolition of houses, the starvation and intimidation, the increased settlement activities and the besieging of the Palestinian President all require that the international community bring pressure to bear on Israel to stop those acts. The Sudan welcomes the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on the illegality of the separation wall and on compensation for all losses caused by it. We welcome resolution ES-10/15, adopted by the General Assembly at its tenth emergency session, on 20 July 2004, demanding that Israel abide by that opinion. An international, comprehensive and just peace in the Middle East will be reached only when Israel withdraws from all occupied Arab lands, including the Syrian Golan Heights and the Lebanese Shali'a farms. There will be no peace or stability until the Palestinian people recover their legitimate rights, including their right to establish an independent Palestinian State with Jerusalem as its capital and the right of refugees to return to their lands.

The difficult situation facing the Iraqi people makes it necessary to assist them to overcome their problems. Here we reaffirm the unity and independence of the Iraqi people and their right to self-determination. We hope that the restoration of those rights will lead to security and stability and to a return to normality in Iraq and that it will enable the Iraqi people to exercise their right to choose their own political leadership through free and fair elections. We call upon the international community to support the Iraqi provisional Government, to help in the reconstruction of Iraq and to support any initiative that would enable the Iraqis to live in dignity in their own country.

Our efforts complement those efforts of the African Union to achieve stability and development in our continent, a continent so rich natural and human resources and capabilities. We have resolved to settle our conflicts and crises, which squander such resources and capabilities, and to work instead to promote economic and social development through the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD).

In conclusion, we reaffirm our determination to achieve a comprehensive and just peace that would lead to stability and well-being for the people of the Sudan and would bolster African Union efforts towards economic and social integrity. We look forward to the United Nations playing its role in establishing justice in international relations based on understanding, cooperation and mutual interests and avoiding confrontation and sanctions, which have proven to be harmful to people.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to Mr. Per Stig Moeller, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Denmark.

Mr. Moeller (Denmark): When we met a year ago, there was widespread concern that we had reached an impasse that threatened to paralyse the United Nations. I am happy to note today that this looming threat of division is receding and is being replaced by a renewed commitment to multilateralism.

In that spirit, Denmark welcomes the Security Council's unanimous adoption of its resolution 1546 (2004), on Iraq. The resolution is, first and foremost, of great significance for the prospects of peace and stability in Iraq and throughout the region. It is also of great importance for the Security Council's ability to perform its role as the custodian of international peace and security.

The United Nations must play a leading role in the political process and in the reconstruction of Iraq. The wisdom and skill of the Secretary-General and his Special Adviser have advanced this process, and we hope that the advisory role of the United Nations will be further enhanced. We urge all Member States to support the interim Government of Iraq in its endeavours to establish peace and security in Iraq.

The year 2005 will be the year in which Member States' willingness to work towards a strong, united and effective United Nations will be tested. The challenge is to develop credible, effective and comprehensive United Nations responses to the threats and challenges of the new millennium, whether they be conflict prevention, conflict resolution and peace-building, or the fight against terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, or respect for human rights and international law, last but certainly not least, the enormous challenge of achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

Denmark strongly supports the Secretary-General's High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change and looks forward to its report later this year. Efforts to reform the Organization, including enlarging the membership of the Security Council, must continue if the United Nations is to meet the new challenges. Democracy is also a question of representation, and if large parts of the world do not feel represented in the Security Council there is a risk that they will not feel bound by its decisions. The Security Council must reflect the realities of the world of today, not those of the past.

We live in a world in which the distinction between military and non-military threats is increasingly blurred. Most current threats are complex and combine elements of both. Creating synergies among development, political and security components will be the key to the success of the United Nations. Denmark will endeavour to assist in this process across the full range of United Nations activities.

Denmark is a candidate for election to the Security Council during this session of the General Assembly. If elected, the focus of Denmark's tenure in the Council will be to seek new and more effective ways of integrating security and development and strengthening international law. In that connection, I welcome the Secretary-General's important opening statement in this debate (see A/59/PV.3), in which he outlined the fundamental principles for a world order based on international law.

Greater coherence is needed in international peace operations. We firmly believe that the United Nations needs to give civilian crisis management the same priority that is accorded to military crisis management. More than 40 per cent of countries emerging from conflict slide back into conflict. In order to build sustainable peace, much more attention needs to be given to the civilian aspects of crisis management. This includes the demobilization and reintegration of combatants as well as the social, economic and legal reconstruction of war-torn societies.

We must make State-building a central goal of conflict management and peace-building, alongside the provision of basic security. Whatever mechanism we set up, the challenge is to ensure the involvement of all stakeholders. That includes national Governments, the Secretariat, United Nations development funds and programmes, the Bretton Woods institutions, regional organizations and bilateral donors.

In order to improve compliance with Security Council resolutions, the process towards targeted and smarter sanctions should be continued. The challenge is twofold. First, the Security Council must rigorously implement its resolutions, including when they stipulate serious consequences in case of non-compliance. Secondly, the countries concerned must be given positive incentives to comply with those resolutions.

Terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction are serious threats to peace and security and impede progress towards stability and prosperity. Terrorists threaten the everyday life and values of millions of innocent individuals. Terrorists must be stopped by hard power and by soft power to prevent decades of unrest and terror.

Countering new threats requires a multifaceted, integrated response by the United Nations and its partners. Success demands synergy, a finely tuned mix of diplomacy, aid, police efforts, intelligence, legal assistance and — if need be — military power. The United Nations must take a leading role in the fight against terrorism, providing both the framework for global efforts and the legitimacy for collective action.

Terror must not lead to isolation; it must not stop globalization. In the world of today, huge global disparities in resources have become apparent to everybody. Social and economic exclusion, as well as deficient democracies, the absence of the rule of law and lack of respect for human rights, contribute to political radicalization and religious extremism. Ensuring that new generations have access to the benefits of globalization — such as democracy and hope for a better future — is a global challenge.

The main responsibility for fighting terrorism lies with individual States. This includes compliance with relevant Security Council resolutions, as well as ratification and implementation of the 12 United Nations conventions against terrorism. Denmark supports efforts to reinvigorate the Counter-Terrorism Committee (CTC). We support efforts to renew and upgrade the offer of technical assistance to countries that need it. The work of the CTC must be better focused and linked with the assistance extended to countries that have the will — but lack the means — to meet the requirements of Security Council resolution 1373 (2001).

Just as important, we must strengthen international agreements to prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Denmark therefore supports Security Council resolution 1540 (2004), and looks forward to its full implementation.

The United Nations has been instrumental in establishing the core international human rights conventions. This year we are celebrating the twenty-fifth anniversary of one of those conventions — the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. The importance of the elimination of discrimination against women and of ensuring respect for the right of women to decide freely over their own lives — including in matters relating to marriage, reproductive health and HIV/AIDS — is self-evident. This main message of the Cairo Programme of Action, adopted 10 years ago, is as relevant today as ever.

With a view to eradicating torture, Denmark calls upon all States to sign and ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture, so that it can enter into force at an early date.

We are now in the era of implementation of those human rights commitments that have been undertaken. As the main body in its field, the Commission on Human Rights has a crucial role to play in this respect and should be further strengthened.

2005 will be a defining moment for the United Nations. World leaders will meet in New York to take stock of progress in the implementation of the Millennium Declaration. That meeting will provide a unique opportunity to break new ground, push ahead with the interlinked agenda of peace, security and development and follow up the recommendations of the High-level Panel.

A key priority for Denmark will be to speed up the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals. The results so far are not sufficiently encouraging — especially with regard to Africa. Denmark attaches the highest priority to Africa's development and would like the situation there and its prospects to be high on the agenda at the 2005 summit.

In order to reach the Millennium Development Goals, an effective partnership will be required between developed and developing countries. The gap between goals and resources must be closed. We are deeply concerned about the inadequacy of the current level of development financing. Further resources are needed, as is better coordination in their allocation.

Last year, Denmark took the lead in making our commitments transparent in a Millennium Development Goals report. A new report will be published next month. We call on all other States to do likewise.

Development efforts and conflict resolution in Africa must go hand in hand. Progress achieved in economic and social development will be sustainable only if we manage to put an end to conflict on the African continent. We stand ready to support the significant and sustained efforts undertaken by the Africans themselves in this regard. There is a need to further strengthen the African security architecture in cooperation with the African Union, subregional African organizations, the United Nations, the European Union and Governments acting bilaterally. We also need to strengthen the regional approaches of the United Nations in the field. Denmark stands ready to contribute actively.

Furthermore, recent natural disasters illustrate the importance of dealing with international environmental issues such as climate change, biodiversity, deforestation and desertification.

The Secretary-General has shown great leadership in pressing for strengthened and effective multilateralism, and things are slowly starting to come together. Our common voyage will not be over with the 2005 summit — far from it. The High-level Panel's report, a renewed focus on post-conflict intervention, and the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals can herald a new age of strong and effective multilateralism if, collectively, we rise to the challenge.

The task of this generation is to hand the world to the next generation in better shape than we received it. Denmark will spare no effort in its endeavours to translate that vision into reality.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Solomon Passy, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Bulgaria.

Mr. Passy (*spoke in French*): I would like, on behalf of Bulgaria, to offer my sincere congratulations to Mr. Jean Ping on his assumption of the presidency — a position of great responsibility. Given his great experience in multilateral diplomacy, I sure that he will lead the deliberations of the fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly to a successful outcome. I would also like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to the work done by his predecessor, Mr. Julian Hunte, to reform and revitalize the Assembly.

(*spoke in English*)

This is the first year that the Republic of Bulgaria has taken part in the deliberations of the General Assembly as a full-fledged member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and as a State which has successfully concluded its negotiations on joining the European Union. We are fully aware of the great responsibility which we bear this year in discharging our mandate as the Chairman-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. All those factors encourage Bulgaria to redouble its efforts in support of the United Nations. We shall continue our efforts aimed at strengthening the authority and role of the United Nations. We shall support the constructive proposals for reforms within the United Nations, which should enhance its capacity and effectiveness.

Today the United Nations faces new challenges, which require resolute joint action and coordination. The United Nations and its bodies, as well as the specialized institutions within its system, will continue to make an important contribution aimed at dealing with extreme poverty and hunger, achieving sustainable development, containing and eliminating violence and human rights abuses and affirming the rule of law, good governance and democratic values.

International terrorism poses the most serious threat to international peace and security. This requires coordinated and resolute action by all States and the entire international community. Nothing can justify terrorist acts. It is essential that terrorists do not get hold of weapons of mass destruction nor distract us from our agenda, as outlined by the Millennium Declaration.

This month the world remembers the victims of the terrorist acts of 11 September, marking the anniversary of those tragic events. We all watched in horror, anguish and anger the cold-blooded massacre of innocent children and their parents in the school in Beslan. That is terrorism at its ugliest.

Bulgaria, too, is firmly convinced that international terrorism threatens all States and that it can be dealt with only through joint efforts. It is for that reason that the people and the Government of Bulgaria have whole-heartedly supported our country's active participation in the global coalition against terrorism. We are committed to pursuing that policy steadfastly, even though we have suffered human losses and sustained damage.

Within the United Nations system, the Security Council and its Counter-Terrorism Committee (CTC) are vested with the task of ensuring success in the fight against international terrorism. We share the view that Security Council resolution 1535 (2004) and the creation of the new Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate have improved coordination in this field. The Al Qaeda and Taliban Committee, beefed up in 2004 with the Monitoring Group and Sanctions Enforcement Support Team, should also continue to wield its positive influence.

Within the framework of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), Bulgaria has been assisting in the joint initiatives of the CTC and OSCE and of the United Nations Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention.

The OSCE has been involved in several countries in south-east Europe for many years now, and its commitment to fostering peace and stability in the region, through its field missions in Macedonia; Croatia; Bosnia and Herzegovina; Albania; Serbia and Montenegro; and Kosovo, Serbia and Montenegro, has proved invaluable. Through activities such as institution- and capacity-building, promoting and supporting legislative reform, respect for human rights, and — in cooperation with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and other international actors — the repatriation of refugees and internally displaced persons, the OSCE has made clear its comparative advantage in the region.

But, while this work is essential, it cannot be done effectively without enhanced efforts by the international community to address the region's lagging infrastructure. The development of infrastructure and political stability must go hand in hand. The people of the region are isolated from each other and from the rest of the region. Indeed, it can take longer to fly from Sofia to Tirana than to cross the Atlantic. There is a desperate need for highways, railways and infrastructure corridors to bring the people of the region closer together. Bulgaria knows from experience the importance for the people of south-eastern Europe of having the prospect of full integration into mainstream European political and economic structures.

Sustained efforts must be made by the international community to stimulate economic growth in that region and to offer young people in particular tangible hope for the future.

Bulgaria has always regarded the stability and security of south-east Europe as one of its priorities. Yet, in spite of the positive changes and the acceleration of the European and Euro-Atlantic integration of the States in the region, the events that took place in Kosovo last March revealed that serious risks and latent threats still exist. Bulgaria supports the emergence of a democratic, multi-ethnic, multi-cultural and multi-religious society in Kosovo. We will continue to cooperate actively with the United Nations Mission in Kosovo so that this aim can finally be attained.

Bulgaria is in favour of the full implementation of Security Council resolution 1244 (1999) and its "standards before status" policy. An agreement on those standards, together with the forthcoming negotiating process, will be decisive for Kosovo's future. We welcome the Secretary-General's initiatives, and in particular the comprehensive review of the political situation in Kosovo prepared by Ambassador Kai Eide. We will continue to lend our active support to Mr. Soren Jessen-Petersen, the Secretary-General's newly appointed Special Representative. We hope that the elections next month will prove to be an important step forward in the context of the social and political processes under way and towards reaching a durable solution to the Kosovo problem.

Bulgaria is firmly convinced that the United Nations must play a key role in the stabilization and restoration of Iraq, in the ongoing political and constitutional process, based on Security Council resolution 1546 (2004), and in the preparations for democratic and free elections. We welcome the first steps taken in Baghdad by Mr. Ashraf Qazi, the Secretary-General's Special Representative, as well as the mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI).

There have been encouraging developments in the resolution of conflicts in certain hot spots in the world, such as Sierra Leone and Timor-Leste. At the same time, there are complicated situations in other regions, particularly in Africa. The situation in Darfur is of serious concern. Security Council resolution 1556 (2004) and the recently adopted resolution 1564 (2004) must be complied with in order to avoid a repetition of the tragedy in other parts of the African continent, similar to the events that occurred during the last decade.

During Bulgaria's chairmanship of the OSCE, we have been making concerted efforts to spur and further develop cooperation between the United Nations and the OSCE. We have been encouraged by the Secretary-General's specific initiatives, aimed at improving the synchronization of actions, communication and exchange of information with regional organizations. We give very high marks to United Nations-OSCE cooperation in the western Balkans, the region of the Caucasus and in Central Asia.

Contemporary geopolitical realities require not only cooperation between the United Nations and the OSCE, but also cooperation with the European Union, NATO, the Council of Europe, the Commonwealth of Independent States and relevant international agencies. In my view, closer interaction between them is of crucial importance to security, stability, democratic prosperity and tolerance throughout the world.

The developments in Georgia have been followed with close attention by the Bulgarian OSCE chairmanship. We have also been actively involved in efforts to avert possible crisis situations in the autonomous region of Ajaria. We note with satisfaction the encouraging changes that have taken place in Azerbaijan and Tajikistan, including the decision of the President of Azerbaijan, announced in March, to release 129 prisoners, as well as the June decision by the President and the Parliament of Tajikistan to impose a moratorium on the death penalty.

The OSCE, through its outreach activities, attaches great importance to assisting the normalization of Afghanistan and its steady progress towards democracy and respect for human rights. We express our satisfaction at the fact that the OSCE will contribute to the monitoring of elections in Afghanistan.

In adapting ourselves to current geopolitical realities, we envisage building a bridge of confidence over the Black Sea — an endeavour which can lay the groundwork for future security, cooperation and tolerance in Europe, in Asia and the rest of the world. We are deeply convinced that the Black Sea dialogue is of special importance not only for participating nations but also because it can set a positive example for other parts of the world.

Respect for and observance of internationally recognized standards of human rights by Member States is a prerequisite both for their national security and for sustainable development. It is also a prerequisite for international peace and security. The protection of basic human rights and fundamental freedoms worldwide is a priority in the policy of the Bulgarian Government. Our historical experience teaches us that, in the quest to achieve prosperity and security in any society, it is necessary to have not only an adequate legal system and mechanisms for its effective implementation, but also a spirit of tolerance. We must not tolerate only one minority and ignore the others. Anti-Semitism, anti-Islamism, anti-Arabism, anti-Europeanism, anti-Americanism and even anti-globalism ought to be equally and totally rejected.

Bulgaria welcomes the progressive reintegration of Libya into the international community. However, my country believes that a compelling message from the Libyan authorities about their respect for human rights and human values could only be communicated through a just solution to the well-known case of the medical workers — six Bulgarians and one Palestinian — who have been held behind bars in Tripoli and Benghazi for almost six years. In this regard, we call upon the United Nations to redouble its efforts in the fight against the HIV/AIDS pandemic in Africa, which we believe is the cause of these tragic developments concerning these seven innocent people.

Bulgaria regards issues concerning women, children and persons belonging to vulnerable groups of the population, including elderly and disabled persons, as inseparable parts of the entire complex of human rights. The Bulgarian Government fully supports the strict implementation of the documents of the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, the twenty-seventh special session of the General Assembly on children, the World Assembly on Ageing, as well as the ongoing efforts of the international community to draft and adopt a convention on the protection of the rights and dignity of disabled persons.

The measures aimed at revitalizing all the activities of the United Nations are of extraordinary importance for the current session of the General Assembly. The effectiveness of the work of United Nations bodies, particularly the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council, is fundamental for solidifying the all-around role of this world Organization. The sooner we do it, the better, and all the more so since next year we will be celebrating the sixtieth anniversary of the United Nations. Let us hope that we will at that time be able to congratulate ourselves on the adoption of these badly needed reforms. Taking all this into consideration and acting on the basis of the political will of all Member States, as declared at the Millennium Summit, we give our support to the common efforts for speeding up United Nations reform and for strengthening the ties and coordination among the United Nations, the Bretton Woods institutions and the World Trade Organization.

The United Nations plays a principal and pivotal role in the Republic of Bulgaria's foreign policy, as stated at the fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly by our Prime Minister, Mr. Simeon Saxe-Coburg-Gotha. To this end, we shall continue our efforts to promote the role of the United Nations and enhance its efficiency and organizational structure in order to promote peace, development, democracy and the rule of law.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to Sheikh Mohammad Al-Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the State of Kuwait.

Mr. Al-Sabah (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): I am pleased to convey my congratulations to the President elected to the fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly. I likewise take this opportunity to express our appreciation to the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for the great efforts he has been exerting to restructure and reform the United Nations, to improve its methods of work and revitalize its role in all fields in order to face the demands and challenges of the twenty-first century.

Reform and restructuring of the United Nations system have become imperatives, since this world Organization remains the ideal mechanism to address the urgent problems of the world, by way of combating poverty and hunger, ensuring the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, achieving disarmament and resolving armed conflicts, combating diseases that take the lives of millions, such as AIDS and malaria. The United Nations has organized numerous international conferences and summits in the last 10 years, such as the Millennium Summit, the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg and the International Conference on Financing for

Development in Monterrey to address those multilateral problems. The international community may not have been able to achieve enough progress in addressing some of these issues, but this should not prevent us from redoubling our efforts to implement the international treaties, resolutions and programmes of action of such United Nations conferences. This must be done in order to ensure respect for the purposes and principles of the Charter, international law, the central role of the United Nations and its primacy in preserving international peace and security and in the strengthening of international cooperation in the economic, social and cultural spheres.

Terrorism is one of the major challenges the United Nations faces in this millennium. Its negative effects are extremely serious and touch upon all States without exception, although to varying degrees. Terrorist attacks such as those of 11 September 2001, the attacks against the brotherly kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the events in Jakarta and Beslan emphasize the fact that this phenomenon affects us all. Its targets are all peoples of the world, not any one State in particular.

We must, therefore, cooperate fully and collectively in addressing the roots of terrorism and not simply deal with its tragic effects. Kuwait has endorsed all of the United Nations resolutions to combat terrorism. Terrorism, however, is not related to any one ethnic group, culture or religion. It is an international phenomenon that must be addressed by the United Nations, as the ideal framework for diagnosing its causes and arriving at the necessary solutions needed to contain it.

A year and a half after the fall of Saddam Hussein's dictatorship, the situation in Iraq continues to be a delicate one of uncertainty and insecurity, due to terrorist acts carried out by armed groups and the remnants of the old regime. This is hampering the efforts of the interim Iraqi Government, which is endeavouring to rebuild what the old regime destroyed through its policy of aggression.

Convinced as we are that security and stability in Iraq mean security for the region as a whole, Kuwait supports the efforts of the Iraqis to rebuild their country in these difficult times, so that Iraq may resume its positive international and regional roles. We are sure that the Iraqi people will be able to do this. In that regard, we support Security Council resolution 1546 (2004), which supports the effort that everyone wishes to see, namely, the preservation of Iraq's sovereignty, territorial integrity and unity. Kuwait supports the interim Government of Iraq, which is expressing the will of the Iraqi people to build a tolerant Iraq that cares about peace, based upon democracy, the building of constitutional institutions and respect for and pursuit of its internal political process, which would be embodied in the establishment of the Iraqi National Congress that would build such institutions, formulate a new constitution, and conduct new and free elections. Kuwait aspires to strong brotherly relations with the new, free Iraq, based on mutual respect, good neighbourliness, respect for bilateral agreements and resolutions under international law.

We welcome, likewise, the creation of a tribunal for former military officers responsible for crimes against the Iraqi people and the people of Kuwait committed during the invasion of Kuwait, as well as for the killing of Kuwaiti prisoners of war and third-country persons.

We express our appreciation to the United Nations and international and regional organizations — such as the Non-Aligned Movement, the Organization of the Islamic Conference, the League of Arab States and the Gulf Cooperation Council — for their support and their condemnation of the old regime, which killed prisoners of war and concealed that crime for more than a decade in flagrant violation of international humanitarian law. We also thank the interim Government, which is seeking to investigate what has happened to those prisoners of war.

We are following with great concern the tragic situation faced by the Palestinian people in the occupied Arab territories as a result of Israeli policies and practices that contravene international and humanitarian law.

We reaffirm our support to the struggle of the Palestinian people and their legitimate claim to recover their political rights. We therefore call upon Israel to respect Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973), and 1515 (2003), the principle of land for peace, the road map and the dismantling of the racial separation wall. That is part of our integral vision for resolving the situation in the Middle East, which must be based on mutual respect and cooperation between all parties.

To ensure stability in the Middle East, we must also work to eradicate weapons of mass destruction, and all parties need to pursue the path of understanding and dialogue to implement the noble principles of the Charter of the United Nations governing inter-State relations and relations among the peoples of the world. We reiterate, in that regard, that the dispute between the United Arab Emirates and the Islamic Republic of Iran concerning the three islands that belong to the Emirates should be resolved by peaceful means. We urge the two parties to resolve that dispute as rapidly as possible.

Regarding Darfur, we are all concerned about the humanitarian tragedy there. We believe that the Sudan is striving to find a reasonable solution to that humanitarian dilemma.

Kuwait is pursuing international and regional efforts to achieve peace and security in both Afghanistan and Somalia, which for many years have suffered from a lack of authority and the deterioration of their economic and political situation owing to the conflicts between various local forces and factions. We support the good offices of the United Nations and regional organizations that have made progress possible at the political level. We hope that those efforts will continue so that national reconciliation in those brotherly nations can be achieved.

The information revolution and the vast technological progress in the areas of trade and communications have brought about interdependence. The world has become a little village, every corner of which can now be reached. Many States, and developing countries in particular, have therefore undergone fundamental changes in their economic framework in order to take advantage of the phenomenon of economic globablization and ensure progress and development for their peoples. Despite the benefits of those policies, such as the liberalization of international trade and the lowering of tariff barriers, many countries, especially the least developed among them, are suffering from marginalization and many aggravated social problems, such as poverty, hunger and the spread of diseases resulting from the deterioration of their economies. For that reason, we call upon the international financial institutions, and the World Trade Organization in particular, to give special attention to the developing countries and to consider providing financial support to improve their economic and social situations. We call upon the developed countries to increase their development assistance, to open access to their markets, and to reduce the debt burden of the developing countries so that they are able to strengthen their economic infrastructure.

Kuwait continues to support development projects in many developing countries through regional and international institutions and organizations, as well as through the Kuwaiti Fund for Arab Economic Development, which we had the honour of establishing over four decades ago and through which we have provided more than $11 billion to over 100 countries.

At the Millennium Summit our leaders laid out the paths to be followed and goals to be attained. Let us work together to achieve a better future for all peoples.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Vuk Drašković, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Serbia and Montenegro.

Mr. Drašković (Serbia and Montenegro) (*spoke in Serbian; English text provided by the delegation*): Allow me at the outset to convey the greetings and best wishes of the people of my country to Member States and their people, and to the Secretary-General.

War, oppression, crime, hatred and suffering plague hundreds of millions of men and women all over the world today. In pursuit of the ideals of peace, democracy and happiness, the United Nations is the united conscience of humankind. In order to achieve the goals of the Millennium Declaration, our Organization must be strengthened structurally, economically and spiritually.

Serbia and Montenegro therefore supports both the initiatives for the enlargement of the Security Council, that based on the need for equal representation of all continents, and that which concedes a special role for the most developed countries, without whose support the United Nations would be unable to fulfil its noble goals.

The fight against global terrorism in all its manifestations, such as anti-Semitism and anti-Islamism, is our primary responsibility today. Those who perpetrated, masterminded and bankrolled terrorist atrocities in New York, Washington, Moscow, Beslan, Jerusalem, Madrid, Istanbul and other places have not only declared war against all nations, but also against God himself, who is the same God for all people.

In the fight against terrorism, force is unavoidable, but prevention is what we need most.

Politicians, international religious and spiritual leaders and the media must constantly emphasize that the killing of children and of innocent civilians are crimes that the terrorists are perpetrating against their own religions and nations and that God will neither forgive them nor reward them with paradise for such crimes. Multilateralism is the only means to prevent the catastrophe of the clash between faiths and civilizations. At the same time, terrorism must be condemned with equal resolve by everyone. There can be no acceptable terrorists, nor should terrorists be proclaimed as "freedom fighters" anywhere.

Serbia and Montenegro is a small country that has been confronted with most of the world's current problems and misfortunes. The recent wars that saw the break-up of Yugoslavia — one of the founding members of the United Nations — have had immense and painful consequences: unemployment; poverty; the tragic plight of some 600,000 refugees; hopelessness among young people, which breeds drug dependence; a rising suicide rate; and the desperate position of Serbs in Kosovo and Metohija.

The reality of Kosovo and Metohija today is both dramatic and grim. Over the past five years, the international administration and dominance of the Albanian majority of this Serbian province have led to the killing or abduction of more than 2,500 Serbs, including many children, and to the destruction of 1,500-year-old churches and monasteries and approximately 40,000 homes. As a result of terrorism and massive violations of basic human rights, nearly 200,000 Serbs and other non-Albanians have been expelled from Kosovo and Metohija.

The hopes of suffering victims are directed towards the United Nations, particularly its bodies and specialized agencies. I take this opportunity to express my most profound gratitude to the Secretary-General and to the Director-General of UNESCO for the decision to convene, in November, an international donor conference aimed at funding the reconstruction of destroyed churches and monasteries in Kosovo. We are also grateful for the principled position that all homes must be rebuilt, that conditions must be created for the return of all of those who have been expelled and that the Serbs in Kosovo and Metohija must be guaranteed the right to life and to freedom of movement and all civil, national and religious freedoms.

The spirit of a united Europe and a united world lives in the hearts of Serbs and Montenegrins. While we respect the existing State borders that we share with our neighbours, we wish to erase them in everyday life and to build a common European future based on dialogue, reconciliation and equality among all nations. We are fully confident that, with the strong support of the United Nations, we will attain that goal.

But the insistence by some on the creation of a sovereign State of Kosovo amounts to a call for the break-up of the sovereign State of Serbia and Montenegro. Such an objective breeds new hatred and misery and is contrary to the basic tenets of international law and to the Charter of the United Nations. We will not agree to the violation of the rights of our State and its citizens.

By applying consistent standards in addressing all crimes, the United Nations will assist the efforts of the democratic Government in Serbia and Montenegro to fulfil our obligations to the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, which is something we must do. The nation is innocent; responsibility rests on the individual, and none of those who have been indicted for war crimes has the right to hold a nation hostage.

All of us on this planet are brothers and sisters. *Gens una sumus*: we are all one family. Therefore, the primary obligation of any majority, whether religious, racial or ethnic, is to fully protect the rights of minorities. I can assure the Assembly that my Government is unreservedly committed to that principle.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): We have heard the last speaker in the general debate for this meeting. I call on the representative of Spain, who wishes to speak in exercise of the right of reply. May I remind members that, in accordance with General Assembly decision 34/401, statements in exercise of the right of reply are limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and five for the second and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Palacio (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): Yesterday, the Spanish delegation listened attentively to the statement of the Prime Minister of Equatorial Guinea, His Excellency Mr. Miguel Abia Biteo Boricó, before the General Assembly. His words, as far as references to Spain are concerned, were received by my delegation with astonishment. The extremely grave accusations made against Spain — that it supposedly participated with financing and logistical support in an attempted coup d'état in Equatorial Guinea last March — are unacceptable in every respect. Those accusations, which Spain vigorously rejects, are being made repeatedly by members of the Government of Equatorial Guinea without having thus far presented to the Assembly or to any other forum the slightest evidence to support them.

Many times, the Spanish Government has denied, before the Government of Equatorial Guinea, any involvement in the facts reported and has reaffirmed our strong commitment to ensure that no activities are carried out from Spanish territory that seek to destabilize or overthrow any foreign Government by violent or anti-democratic means.

Spain maintains friendly relations with all countries of the world and, of course, with Equatorial Guinea, based on the principles of international law, among them respect for sovereignty and non-interference in the internal affairs of other States. The Spanish delegation takes this opportunity to reaffirm our Government's willingness to maintain the best relations of friendship and cooperation with the authorities of Equatorial Guinea. We believe that sufficient channels exist between the two Governments to appropriately address and resolve any issue that may be a source of concern.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I call on the representative of Equatorial Guinea, who wishes to speak on a point of order.

Ms. Nchama Nsue (Equatorial Guinea) (*spoke in Spanish*): On the basis of the statement in exercise of the right of reply just made by the representative of Spain concerning the statement made yesterday by my country's Prime Minister before the General Assembly, my delegation reserves the right to present a reply, which will be made at the appropriate time.

The meeting rose at 8.30 p.m.

United Nations A/59/PV.9

General Assembly
Fifty-ninth session

Official Records

9th plenary meeting

Friday, 24 September 2004, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Ping .... (Gabon)

The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

Address by Mr. Fradique Bandeira Melo de Menezes, President of the Democratic Republic of Sao Tome and Principe

The President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Democratic Republic of Sao Tome and Principe.

Mr. Fradique Bandeira Melo de Menezes, President of the Democratic Republic of Sao Tome and Principe, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Fradique Bandeira Melo de Menezes, President of the Democratic Republic of Sao Tome and Principe, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President De Menezes (*spoke in French*): As French is the most widely recognized official language in the Central Africa subregion, I should like to begin my statement by addressing a few words to the Assembly in that common language.

I would like to say how pleased I am to be here with you today, Mr. President — you in your capacity as the President of the General Assembly and me in mine as President of my country. I am also pleased to address the Assembly in order to speak on behalf of the people of Sao Tome and Principe.

I shall now deliver my address in Portuguese — which, as the Assembly is aware, is the official language of Sao Tome and Principe.

(*spoke in Portuguese; English text furnished by the delegation*)

Allow me, at the outset, to congratulate you most warmly, Mr. President, on your election as President of the fifty-ninth session on the General Assembly, whose proceedings will undoubtedly benefit from your personal qualities and your experience in international relations. Gabon and my country, Sao Tome and Principe, have long enjoyed a very good relationship of cooperation at various levels, and my delegation wishes you success in your new functions.

May I also thank the President's predecessor, President Julian Robert Hunte of Saint Lucia, for the excellent work he has done.

On behalf of people of Sao Tome and Principe, I would like to pay tribute to the Secretary-General for his relentless efforts and dedication at the service of the goals of the United Nations, and for his work in promoting peace and development.

This session of the General Assembly is taking place during a particularly complex international situation. Violence and the violation of human rights are increasing. The United Nations must play its role as a matter of priority; otherwise world order could collapse. More than ever before, Governments must give a universal forum like this the responsibility to rebuild international order on the basis of peace,

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-154A. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

respect for human rights, security and cooperation for development. Unilateralism must be put aside. We have to work together for a better world.

Intolerance, terrorism, occupation, discrimination, organized crime and social injustice are some of the sources of today's open conflicts. Religious differences and drug trafficking in some countries are driving people to high levels of violence and destruction. We the people the United Nations have to do our best to stop those atrocities, or unprotected groups of society will disappear and the spiral of violence could spread out of control.

Darfur is an example of discrimination and atrocity. We call on Sudan's Government to fulfil all the provisions contained in Security Council resolution 1556 (2004), which was adopted on 30 July.

It is completely unacceptable that 50 million people worldwide have become refugees or have been internally displaced as a result of having been driven from their homes by war, persecution and human rights abuses. We now needed concrete action by leaders and peoples to ensure that the perpetrators of criminal behaviour are brought to justice, thereby rebuilding confidence among peoples and nations, but especially to address the root causes of violence.

Small island States will meet in Mauritius to assess the progress made since the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, which was held in Barbados. Progress in the implantation of the Barbados Programme of Action has been mixed. At Mauritius, key issues will be reviewed and decisions and recommendations will be made with regard to the questions of climate change, natural and environmental disasters, fresh water, land resources, waste management, tourism, energy, transport, biodiversity and coastal and marine resources. All those are issues affecting the ecosystems of small islands as a result of global warming. They can only be solved gradually and if the international community increases resources effectively to support the sustainable development of small island States. We would like to take this opportunity to thank the international community for everything it has done to date. I would like to extend a special thanks to the Government of Mauritius for its efforts to organize the special international conference.

As an island nation, Sao Tome and Principe continues to see its very existence threatened by global warming. Our shorelines are eroding and our national territory is shrinking as the seas rise. Is my small country to end up nothing but a tiny volcanic peak sticking out above the waves, with the last of our people clinging to the land left unclaimed by the rising sea? The Kyoto Protocol must be implemented by all for the benefit of all.

The Governments of Africa launched the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), aiming specifically at optimally mobilizing both African and international resources and at harmonizing contributions through a partnership based on mutual commitments and balanced interests and responsibilities. Peace, good governance, security and development are challenges that all African Governments and peoples have to face. They must create the conditions to achieve those goals. Those goals are far from being reached, given the numerous conflicts and the destructive and negatives effects of conflicts. My Government will continuously support NEPAD and will work to create the foundations for its implementation.

Most countries continue to face the challenge of HIV/AIDS and other diseases. In some parts of Africa HIV/AIDS is devastating entire families, societies, cultures and economies. Treatment is still expensive, and our economy has started to feel the negative effects of the disease. Unless there are additional resources and scientific investment to find a cure for HIV/AIDS, hope for progress in Africa will continue to be far from reach

It is not only health problems that afflict poor countries. Globalization affects some because few have all the necessary conditions to develop trade and commerce and to take advantage of new technologies. The latest efforts by the World Trade Organization in Geneva are an example of the fact that those who have too much could make a difference by giving away a little to poor countries. If that is not done, we will continue to face discriminatory tariffs and to experience erosion in quality of life.

My country regrets that international relations in some parts of the world have deteriorated to the point where extreme violence, destruction and violation of human rights and the environment are daily facts of life, and where the use and abuse of dangerous weapons is endemic. We also regret that refugees and children are among the targets in those conflicts.

Tragedies cannot be our destiny. Tragedies and natural disasters such as the ones we face in Iraq, the

Middle East, Bangladesh and some countries in Africa and elsewhere are testimony of the fact that mankind is moving towards facing bigger challenges. My Government thinks that multilateralism under the framework of the United Nations is the only way for the international community to be able to achieve lasting peace and development.

Terrorism around the world is causing destruction, destabilizing Governments and killing people in places such as Madrid, the Middle East and elsewhere. We are confronted by a dilemma, because thus far all the strategies employed to fight this scourge are not producing significant results. Under the authority of the Security Council, we must guarantee the universality of, and compliance with, non-proliferation treaties.

My Government supports the recommendations of Secretary-General Kofi Annan on Timor-Leste. The United Nations Mission of Support in East Timor is a success we cannot ignore.

The universality of the Organization must be a fact, and all countries have to be represented. Taiwan is not represented. We call upon the international community to address the issue of Taiwan's representation. Despite its small size, Taiwan offers development aid to a large number of countries. Taiwan has all the elements to be an active member of the main international organizations. A look at its economy, trade relations, commerce, finance, application of new technologies and support for many countries reveals facts that we cannot ignore any longer.

We would also like to refer to Cuba. Economic embargo is a severe sanction. It violates the Charter of the United Nations and international law. I would like to request that the General Assembly lend its assistance to bring about an end to the economic embargo against Cuba. The cold war era is behind us, and a people in need simply cannot continue to be the object of the political interest of part of the electorate in Florida.

In Sao Tome and Principe we are working very hard to consolidate our young democracy and to create a solid foundation for sound development. Following the agreement signed among the Government, the international community and the military — which mounted a coup in Sao Tome and Principe in 2003 — we organized a national forum that brought all segments of our society to the table to bring their views closer together and to draw up recommendations in order to avoid more instability in the country.

On the economic front, we are preparing the country for a new era based on oil exploration and production. Our National Assembly has adopted a law on the management of the revenues that we will eventually receive from oil companies. That shows that corruption will be fought, that the new generation will be protected and that the country will have enough resources for development.

The Government and the people of Sao Tome and Principe adhere to the principles of respect for the sovereignty of all countries and following the path of dialogue, tolerance and mutual understanding among peoples. We call on all members of the United Nations to do likewise for the sake of a better world.

I would like to conclude by expressing our gratitude to all countries Members of the United Nations for the support given to our country at the time of the first-ever coup d'état in Sao Tome and Principe, in June 2003. I would also like to thank all the countries of Central Africa — including Congo (Brazzaville), which currently presides over the Economic Community of Central African States — for everything they have done. I also wish to thank the President of the General Assembly and our partners in Central Africa and the African Union for their tireless efforts.

The President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Democratic Republic of Sao Tome and Principe for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Fradique Bandeira Melo de Menezes, President of the Democratic Republic of Sao Tome and Principe, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Branko Crvenkovski, President of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

The President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

Mr. Branko Crvenkovski, President of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Branko Crvenkovski, President of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Crvenkovski: Allow me at the outset to extend my congratulations to you, Mr. Jean Ping, on your election as President of the fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly, and to express my conviction that this session will be concluded successfully under your presidency. Moreover, I take this opportunity to congratulate the President of the fifty-eighth session, Mr. Julian Hunte, on his dedication and on the successful fulfilment of his responsibilities.

Last year was extremely challenging, for both the world community and the United Nations. In that regard, I would like to commend Secretary-General Kofi Annan for his efforts and contributions in preserving peace in the world. In his recent address (see A/59/PV.3), he clearly demonstrated once again his dedication to the cause of the Organization.

We certainly all agree that the United Nations continues to be the most relevant global forum addressing international peacekeeping and security issues. We also agree on the need to renew and reform its bodies and agendas in order to preserve the vital role of the Organization. In that context, we look forward to reading the report being drafted by the High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change, which was created by the Secretary-General.

With regard to the reform of the Security Council, the Republic of Macedonia considers it extremely important to increase the membership of the Council with regard to both permanent and non-permanent seats.

The renewal and strengthening of the role of the Economic and Social Council is equally relevant. The Republic of Macedonia has presented its candidacy for the election to the Economic and Social Council to be held during this session. We are confident that, if elected and with the support of the General Assembly, my country will be able to make its full contribution to improving the efficiency of the Council.

As far as the revitalization of the General Assembly is concerned, we think that we must seize the momentum, implement the provisions of the revised agenda and pursue efforts to make the work of the Main Committees more focused and rational.

Unfortunately, once again this year, inhuman acts of terrorism have continued to take innocent lives and to preoccupy world public opinion. We were all horrified by the images of human suffering in Madrid, Beslan and elsewhere. In order to enhance the capacity of the international community in this respect, we need to further consolidate the world anti-terrorist coalition led by the United Nations and, additionally, strengthen cooperation with regional organizations that have specific mechanisms to fight this global evil.

The Republic of Macedonia will continue its active cooperation with the Counter-Terrorism Committee of the Security Council and make its own contribution to the implementation of resolution 1373 (2001). In that regard, I would like to inform the Assembly that, last May, the Republic of Macedonia ratified the International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism and the International Convention for the Suppression of Terrorist Bombings.

The proliferation of weapons of mass destruction remains one of the major threats to international peace and security, and it is closely related to terrorism. We welcome the Security Council's adoption of resolution 1540 (2004) on the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. The implementation of that resolution will complement the existing set of instruments and consolidate the role of the Security Council in this area.

The suppression of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons and the total prohibition of anti-personnel mines are also very important issues, given the size of the problem and the number of victims caused by mines. Doing so will contribute greatly to conflict prevention and successful peacekeeping and peace-building throughout the world, including our region. At the end of last year, the Republic of Macedonia conducted a successful effort to collect small arms and light weapons. That effort had the support of the United Nations Development Programme. Efforts in this regard are ongoing.

We expect that the first review conference of countries parties to the Ottawa Convention, which is to be held in Nairobi, will produce a summary of the results achieved through the implementation of that extremely important instrument, which will pave the way to the creation of a world free of landmines.

The Republic of Macedonia has destroyed its mine stockpiles and is working on the demining of affected regions. The United Nations Mine Action Service, together with the International Trust Fund for

Demining and Mine Victims Assistance, have provided a great deal of help in our demining activities.

Unfortunately, violent conflicts have continued this year. The armed conflict in Darfur and the terrible humanitarian tragedy it brought about require decisive action. We support the Security Council resolution in this regard, and we join the call for further and urgent action on this matter.

The situation in the Middle East continues to keep the world on edge. We support the efforts of the Quartet to find a solution acceptable to all sides and we share the conviction that the road map is the only way to reach a solution for Palestine and Israel, two neighbouring States that will one day live in peace.

Building peace and fostering democracy in Afghanistan and Iraq, where the Republic of Macedonia is part of the multinational force, remains a challenge facing both the international community and the peoples of those two countries. I would like to emphasize the exceptional importance of the implementation of resolution 1546 (2004), which endorsed the restoration of Iraq's sovereignty and provided the core framework for the political transformation and democratization of that State.

With regard to Iraq, I would like to appeal to the authorities of that country to do their utmost to find the three Macedonian citizens who have disappeared there.

The Millennium Development Goals remain the key challenge for the Organization. In September 2005, heads of State and Government from around the world will meet to review what has been done in realizing the Goals in the five years since the adoption of the Millennium Summit Declaration. It is crystal clear that we must take decisive steps if we want to mobilize political will and resources and carry out reforms on the national and global levels to meet the Goals by 2015.

However, it is already clear that some regions of the world will find it very difficult to achieve the projected Goals. Special attention should be dedicated to Africa, where the situation is alarming and the issues of poverty and hunger eradication and the problem of AIDS are very serious. Achieving the Goals will not be possible unless the international community is ready to assume its share of responsibility in that respect.

The Republic of Macedonia places special emphasis on the importance of effective respect for, and promotion of, human rights as one of the pillars of every democratic society. The rule of law and effective respect for human rights are the best instrument in preventing conflicts, as well as prerequisites for peace and prosperity. Today, we are increasingly aware of the need to nurture and respect multiculturalism as a precondition to the development of a secure and harmonious world. In that regard, every effort should be made to create mutual confidence and understanding and to promote respect for differences. The Republic of Macedonia is deeply committed to those principles, and we adhere to them strictly in our actions.

For half a century now, the United Nations has had a key role in the development of international human rights law. In that context, we welcome current efforts to harmonize the draft international convention to protect the rights of disabled persons.

Good-neighbourly relations are one of the foreign policy priorities of the Republic of Macedonia, as one of the promoters of regional cooperation in South-East Europe. I would like to take this opportunity to inform the Assembly that, as during previous sessions, the delegation of the Republic of Macedonia will propose the adoption by the General Assembly of a draft resolution on good-neighbourly relations, stability and development in South-Eastern Europe.

In recent years, the countries of the region have made considerable progress at both the domestic level and in developing mutual relations. We are actively cooperating in numerous regional initiatives and in the framework of the Euro-Atlantic integration process. However, despite the considerable progress made at the level of stabilization and improved security in the region, not all sources of potential instability have been eliminated. We strongly believe that the process of the region's accelerated integration into the European Union and NATO will weaken existing threats at the national and regional levels.

As an immediate neighbouring country, the Republic of Macedonia is following with particular attention the developments in Kosovo. We fully support the United Nations policy of standards before status, whose final goal is to establish a true multi-ethnic community and to improve security, democratization and the rule of law. At the same time, the Republic of Macedonia is also lending its continued support to the United Nations and other international bodies as they carry out their responsible missions.

We have developed contractual cooperation with the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo in various areas, with a view to resolving concrete issues that are relevant to the population. We expect very soon to start the process of the demarcation of our border with Kosovo. Also with regard to Kosovo, I would like to emphasize the fact that any decision on its future status must not result in the destabilization of the region.

The Republic of Macedonia is going through a critical stage in the process of carrying out fundamental economic and social reforms and transforming its society to prepare it for accelerated integration into the European Union. The finalization of the implementation of the framework agreement concluded in 2001 is a priority in that process. Most of the legal regulations resulting from the constitutional changes flowing from the framework agreement have already been adopted. Nevertheless, one of the main issues pertaining to decentralization — namely, territorial reorganization — could pose a challenge, given the upcoming referendum. That referendum is a democratic event of the highest order that provides citizens with an opportunity to express their opinions on the concept being put forth by the Government.

Finally, I would like to conclude by saying that the world is facing a range of challenges and threats, but that our experience so far has proven that there is no alternative to the multilateral approach to overcoming threats to international peace and security. Our experience has also proven that dialogue remains the most valuable and powerful instrument in our endeavours to create a different and safer world.

The President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Branko Crvenkovski, President of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Ilham Heydar oglu Aliyev, President of the Republic of Azerbaijan

The President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

Mr. Ilham Heydar oglu Aliyev, President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Ilham Heydar oglu Aliyev, President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Aliyev: I would like to join previous speakers in congratulating you, Mr. President, on your election to the presidency of the fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly. I also wish to congratulate your predecessor, Mr. Julian Robert Hunte, for his exemplary stewardship of the Assembly during his presidency of the fifty-eighth session.

At the Millennium Summit, Member States committed themselves to a shared vision of global solidarity and common security. We reaffirmed our faith in the United Nations and its Charter as indispensable for a more peaceful, secure and just world. As we have entered the new century we have done our best to maintain the vital importance of international law, so that all countries may be able to count on the Organization in their hour of need and so that, in turn, the United Nations can fulfil what the world expects from it.

Some of our actions sought to protect millions of innocent people, especially women and children, who still fall victim to brutal armed conflicts. Others endeavoured to establish a more equitable world economy, where all countries must have equal chances at fair competition.

Azerbaijan is making its own contribution to the strengthening of global and regional security. As an active member of the global coalition against international terrorism, Azerbaijan is faithfully cooperating, bilaterally and within multilateral frameworks, to suppress this evil that continues to bring death and suffering to innocent peoples. Azerbaijan is among the countries that have suffered directly from the consequences of armed conflicts on its territory. In reality those conflicts are interlinked, and we have no other choice but to face them in cooperation and unity. There should be no room for double standards.

Since the very day it became a member of the United Nations, Azerbaijan has constantly drawn the attention of the international community to the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh and to the occupation by Armenia of Azerbaijani territories. Azerbaijan expected the United Nations to compel the aggressor to move out of its land and to allow the expelled Azerbaijani population to return to their homes. I should like to recall that, in 1993, the Security Council unanimously adopted four resolutions — resolutions 822 (1993), 853 (1993), 874 (1993) and 884 (1993) — in response to Armenia's occupation of sovereign Azerbaijani territories.

Those resolutions confirmed that the region of Nagorno-Karabakh was part of Azerbaijan, resolutely called for respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Azerbaijan and its internationally recognized borders, and underlined the inadmissibility of the use of force for the purpose of acquiring territory. The resolutions demanded an immediate, complete and unconditional withdrawal of occupying forces from all occupied areas of Azerbaijan and called for the establishment of conditions for the safe return of displaced people to their places of permanent residence.

None of those resolutions — which were intended to restore justice and peace and the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan — has been implemented by Armenia, which never respected or recognized the fundamental principles of international law contained in the resolutions that laid down the basis for the settlement of the conflict. Nagorno-Karabakh and seven other regions of Azerbaijan, which make up 20 per cent of the territory of Azerbaijan, have been occupied by Armenia for more than 10 years. As a result of the policy of ethnic cleansing conducted by Armenia, more than 1 million of Azerbaijan's people have become refugees or internally displaced persons.

The silence of the Security Council has had a devastating impact on the resettlement process. Armenia has ignored the resolutions and has attempted to consolidate the results of its military aggression — and it has not been punished for it. Armenia consequently launched an outrageous policy involving massive illegal settlement of an Armenian population in occupied Azerbaijani territories. That also is a blatant violation of international law, and in particular of the 1949 Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War. Moreover, the situation has deteriorated, with those territories being used for drug trafficking, arms transfers, the harbouring of terrorists, illegal economic activities and smuggling. The occupied Azerbaijani territories have become a kind of grey zone out of the control of Azerbaijan's Government and free from any international monitoring.

The self-proclaimed, non-recognized so-called Nagorno-Karabakh republic is a constant threat to peace and security in the whole region. Armenian aggressors and Nagorno-Karabakh separatists are also exploiting natural resources in the occupied Azerbaijani territories and are attempting to engage overseas companies in their illegal business. I call upon Member States to take all necessary measures to make their nationals and companies respect international law and to prevent them from illegal activities on the territory of our country. For its part, Azerbaijan will undertake all necessary legal and practical measures to hold those companies accountable for participation in the stealing of the natural wealth belonging to a sovereign nation.

Furthermore, Armenia is falsifying history and misappropriating the cultural and architectural heritage of the Nagorno-Karabakh region of Azerbaijan. Religious and historical monuments, ancient manuscripts and other cultural properties have been destroyed, refashioned, plundered or removed.

The process of political settlement of the conflict that has been conducted within the Minsk Group of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) during the last 12 years has thus far yielded no results. No serious consideration has been given by the Minsk Group to the implementation of the Security Council's resolutions, to assessing the situation on the ground or to the illegal activities carried out by Armenia in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan.

It is obvious that, under the current passive and silent attitude of the United Nations, the Security Council, the OSCE and the Minsk Group, and without strong pressure from the international community, Armenia will not abandon its aggressive and destructive stance. The illegal actions of Armenia in occupied Azerbaijani territories and its position in the negotiating process prove that Armenia is not intent on finding a solution to the problem. Rather, it intends to further prolong the negotiations and to consolidate the results of its aggression, while trying ultimately to impose a fait-accompli-based settlement.

I wish to stress from this podium that a settlement of this issue must be based only on international law and democracy, not on ethnic cleansing and the de facto annexation of the territory of a sovereign State. Azerbaijan will never accept the occupation of its territory, the violation of its territorial integrity or the results of ethnic cleansing.

The return of Azerbaijan's displaced population to their homes remains one of our key priorities in the process of settling the conflict. But even before our expelled people, refugees and internally displaced persons come back home, there is still an urgent need for all the relevant United Nations agencies, donor countries and international humanitarian organizations to be actively involved in addressing the suffering of the most affected part of population.

The Government of Azerbaijan does not spare time, effort or financial resources to do its part; but given the scale of displacement, that is not sufficient. Burden-sharing between the Government and relevant international organizations is crucial. In addition to purely material support, we also request a renewal of international attention to the problem and better coordination on the part of the United Nations and its specialized agencies, as well as efforts by all international organizations. We expect a more responsive strategy by the United Nations with regard to the state of the forgotten humanitarian crisis in Azerbaijan.

Azerbaijan is fully committed to the objectives of poverty eradication and to the promotion of good governance. On that basis, and as a result of the measures we have undertaken, we are currently seeing increased economic performance and growth. Azerbaijan is making its contribution to the development of transregional cooperation. We are also promoting such transportation and communication networks as the Transport Corridor Europe Caucasus Asia project and the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan and Baku-Tbilisi-Erzerum oil and gas pipelines. Those projects will ensure predictable access for the exports of land-locked countries to world and regional markets.

The United Nations has to adapt itself in order to successfully tackle all the challenges it faces. The long-standing issue of United Nations reform needs finally to be resolved. The inability of the Security Council to cope with problems, and particularly those related to armed conflicts, is obvious. The new Security Council should be more representative, responsible and democratic. Its working methods must be more transparent and able to respond more rapidly to the new challenges, risks and threats of the twenty-first century. Developing viable mechanisms for the implementation of Security Council resolutions is also a pressing issue.

It is the obligation of all of us to collectively apply effective approaches to current problems, thereby enabling a stable environment for the sustainable growth and democratic development of nations. That can only be achieved through strengthening the norms and principles of international law and through friendly relations and mutually beneficial cooperation among States.

The President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Ilham Heydar oglu Aliyev, President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Agenda item 9 (*continued*)

General debate

Address by The Honourable Ralph Gonsalves, Prime Minister of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines

The President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.

The Honourable Ralph Gonsalves, Prime Minister of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President (*spoke in French*): I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency The Honourable Ralph Gonsalves, Prime Minister of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Gonsalves (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines): The fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly coincides with the twenty-fifth anniversary of the independence of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. The last quarter of a century has presented a mighty challenge for the people of my country: to develop in a world increasingly indifferent to the particular problems of small, poor, developing States. But it is a challenge that the citizens of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines have embraced with courage, fortitude and hope —

never doubting our ability to survive, thrive and ultimately prosper as we contribute to the uplifting of our unique, independent, distinctive and noble Caribbean civilization. Our country has made progress thus far, but much more remains to be done. We look forward to succeeding in our quest for self-mastery.

I would like to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your assumption of the presidency of the fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly. We are confident that you will perform your duties with dignity and skill. Let me just say that you have a hard act to follow. Your predecessor, our Mr. Julian Hunte, is a distinguished son of the Caribbean who hails from our sister island, Saint Lucia. He made us proud in his role as President of the General Assembly.

The peoples of the Caribbean and the southern United States are still traumatized by the devastation caused by hurricanes this season. Jamaica, the Bahamas, the Cayman Islands, Haiti, Cuba and other Caribbean countries, including my own, have been severely affected. But our nearest neighbour, Grenada, has suffered cataclysmic destruction and is now in a state of national crisis. We offer our profound condolences to the families and loved ones of those who have died in the hurricanes. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and other Caribbean nations have reached out a helping hand to Grenada, but the magnitude of the devastation in that country on 7 September is beyond the capacity of the Caribbean to address satisfactorily by itself. Indeed, Grenada has become an international responsibility.

I therefore reiterate the call of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) for the urgent convening of an international donors' conference to address the matter of Grenada's utter devastation and its reconstruction. Simply put, Grenada has moved from the status of a middle-income developing country with a modern, sophisticated society and well run, democratic State machinery to a devastated land in a matter of three hours of pounding from hurricane Ivan. Today in Grenada there is no functioning economy and a highly traumatized civil society.

Arising from all that is a strategic issue in our quest to turn Grenada's setback into a regional advance for a more profound and meaningful Caribbean integration. Hurricane Ivan has spoken eloquently to the fact that nature has made our region one. History has further moulded us as one people who were drawn originally from diverse lands and cultures. Yet we in the Caribbean continue to buck, rather than accommodate ourselves appropriately to, both nature and history. That is a sort of vanity that we can ill-afford.

It is tragic that it takes a catastrophe of this nature to hammer home the point that the small island developing States have been making for some time, namely, that there is a need for special and differential treatment because of, among other things, our vulnerability to natural disasters.

I repeat, without exaggeration, that Hurricane Ivan, in a few short hours, reduced Grenada to rubble and, at a stroke, undid the hard work and achievements of its people since independence in 1974. We in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines feel their pain and know that, but for the grace of God and the vagaries of nature, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines would have suffered the same fate.

Accordingly, the crisis in Grenada, occasioned by nature, prompts Saint Vincent and the Grenadines to give the highest priority to the international conference to be held in Mauritius in January of next year, when the specific and distinct problems of small island developing States will be highlighted. We will be stressing the need for the international community to take urgent action on the problem of global warming and climate change, which, if left unchecked, could lead to a global human and economic calamity in this century. The international community must become focused on the avoidance of that threatened apocalypse.

Since we met here last year, the Caribbean Community has faced another crisis in our region — this time, a political one — as one of our member States, Haiti, descended into chaos, violence and anarchy. We saw an elected head of State removed in circumstances that bring no credit to our hemisphere. We remain deeply troubled by the controversial interruption of the democratic process that took place in the early hours of the morning of 28 February this year in Port-au-Prince. It is worth remembering that CARICOM States were instrumental in preparing a plan of Action for Haiti to ensure that the Constitution of that country was respected and to create the basis for a mobilization of resources to avert a humanitarian disaster.

On 25 February 2004, CARICOM was successful in having the matter raised at a meeting of the Security Council. On that occasion, we went to the Council armed with a draft resolution. We pleaded for the international community to respond to the rapidly deteriorating situation in Haiti. The draft resolution presented by CARICOM to the Security Council was noted but politely ignored. The rest is history. The Government and people of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines are anxious to help the Haitian people in the sorry plight in which they currently find themselves. But before engaging politically with the so-called interim Government of Haiti, we must see, among other things, unequivocal evidence on the ground of advances in democracy and freedom and credible guarantees of free and fair elections within a reasonable time. A regime that tries an indicted murderer at midnight, one who was hailed by the very regime as a liberator, and then frees him before the first cock crows, has failed the most elemental tests of justice, freedom and democracy.

The death and destruction occasioned by Hurricane Jean in Haiti demand our humanitarian assistance, not our political engagement with the Haitian regime.

The dire situation in the Darfur region of Sudan has caused great distress to the Government and people of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. My own personal grief prompted me to write letters in May of this year to several world leaders, including Secretary-General Kofi Annan, offering the slender resources of my country to assist in whatever small way we could to alleviate the suffering of the afflicted Sudanese people. Most of those I addressed responded positively. It is true that — thanks in large measure to the diligence of various journalists and the news media — this tragedy has now been brought forcefully to international attention. But the question we must nevertheless ask ourselves is this: has the international community reacted in an appropriate way to this calamity, or have we merely engaged in the usual perfunctory and routine denunciations? The images and reports coming out of Darfur are a chilling reminder of man's inhumanity to man and a haunting condemnation of those who can truly help but who stand by idly or downplay this humanitarian disaster callously. In that regard, the Government of Sudan must shoulder its responsibility to its citizens and to humanity.

Three months have gone by since I wrote to the Secretary-General, and this massive human tragedy continues to unfold before our appalled eyes. I suggest that we cannot allow the bloodbath to continue. We must save those who can still be saved in what have become the killing fields of Africa. The genocide of yesterday in Rwanda stands as a monument of shame to the international community. As an international community we must today take the shame out of our eyes in Darfur with urgent practical measures.

A similar effort is required to address the harsh conditions of life of other peoples, including the heroic nation of Palestine, whose humanity is being daily assailed by outside forces.

I would like to express, on behalf of the people of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, our deepest sympathy to the Government and people of the Russian Federation on the tragic and inexplicable events in Beslan on 3 September. A tragedy of that magnitude, and especially the slaughter of so many innocent children, cannot fail to cause heartfelt sorrow.

Since 11 September 2001, the fight against international terrorism has intensified on all fronts. It is right and proper that rich and poor countries be engaged in the ongoing war on the barbarism of terror. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines is a reliable partner in the global struggle against the evil of terrorism. Still, it is necessary for me to point out that the cost of being a reliable participant in that war is a heavy burden on the meagre resources of developing countries like Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. Our international obligations and circumstances necessarily pull us into that war, which we did not occasion or initiate. Yet we bear that imposed burden with equanimity and pain.

This body, however, must be reminded yet again that there is another terrorism that we must fight relentlessly. It is the terrorism of war, poverty, illiteracy and disease, including HIV/AIDS. We must never forget, either, that daily hunger for 1 billion persons worldwide is truly a weapon of mass destruction. Together we must fight that terrorism too. Developed countries cannot allow trade regimes and market conditions to further impoverish the poor, as has been the case with banana farmers in the Caribbean, and still trumpet that they are helping the poor.

The case for a judicious and balanced reform of the United Nations to better reflect the reality of the twenty-first century is unanswerably strong. We must redouble our collective efforts to persuade those who fear, unreasonably, the consequences of a just reform. We must not permit entrenched power to defeat right reason.

Since Saint Vincent and the Grenadines became an independent State, it has had unbroken diplomatic relations with the Republic of China on Taiwan. We see that country of liberty and democracy as a most important component of the magnificent Chinese civilization. Taiwan has the world's seventeenth largest economy and the fifteenth largest trading volume internationally, and is third in the global ranking of the extent of foreign exchange reserves held. Taiwan's 23 million people ought properly to be represented in this universal body by the Government of their choice. It is a mistake to continue to deny Taiwan international membership of organizations. The relations between Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and Taiwan have been exemplary. Our friendship demands that we plead their just cause.

I conclude with these observations. Some States boast ownership of boundless territory, vast natural resources and potent firepower; but none of those factors by themselves, or a combination of all three, guarantee peace or prosperity. In some other States poverty, hunger conflict and disease are the norm. If, instead of investing in war — knowing its certain side effect of the waste of young, innocent lives — nations cooperated with each other, striving for ways to solve problems common to all, it is just possible that the world we bequeath to our children will be more peaceful and richer in the ways that matter and boasting cleaner air and a healthier environment. Internationally, and in our own countries, let us emphasize the power of love rather than the love of power. Let us extol not the rightness of power but the righteousness contained in our human condition.

The President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines for the statement he has just made.

The Honourable Ralph Gonsalves, Prime Minister of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by The Honourable Laisenia Qarase, Prime Minister of the Republic of the Fiji Islands

The President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Republic of the Fiji Islands.

The Honourable Laisenia Qarase, Prime Minister of the Republic of the Fiji Islands, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President (*spoke in French*): I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency The Honourable Laisenia Qarase, Prime Minister of the Republic of the Fiji Islands, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Qarase (Fiji): I would like to extend to the General Assembly the warm greetings and good wishes of the Government and people of the Republic of the Fiji Islands. I would also like to warmly congratulate you, Mr. President, on your election to the presidency of the fifty-ninth session. I pledge to you our support and cooperation. That reflects our respect for your country, with which we have enjoyed close relations through our common membership of the African, Caribbean and Pacific partnership with the European Union. I also wish to express Fiji's warm thanks to Mr. Julian Hunte of Saint Lucia for his very able leadership of the fifty-eighth session. Fiji and other small island nations of the Pacific region applaud the fine example set by the countries of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) in their shared approach to managing the responsibilities of that high office.

Today we are confronted by events that cast a shadow over humankind and the United Nations vision of peace. The humanitarian crisis in Sudan continues. As relief efforts proceed, our thoughts are with the refugees of Darfur. We urge the Government of Sudan to do everything in its power to bring that tragedy to an end.

We think of those whose lives have been devastated by the destructive fury of hurricanes in the Caribbean and on the Atlantic coast of the United States. We extend to them our deepest sympathies for the loss of life and property.

The perpetrators of the slaughter of innocents in Russia gave a new dimension to wickedness. They defeated their own cause through the ruthless and indiscriminate shedding of the blood of children. Nothing can justify what they did. The United Nations must be united against such infamy.

Let us express our sympathy and solidarity with the ordinary people of Iraq caught in that country's terrible cycle of violence. Let this forum give them our full and unreserved support in the struggle for genuine democratic Government and the regaining of their national sovereignty. May their hopes for a peaceful future and lasting stability find fulfilment.

We feel for the families of the people killed by terrorists outside the Australian embassy in Jakarta. We want them to know that their pain is shared in this family of nations.

The plea from Fiji is for United Nations member countries to strengthen their joint resolve to oppose political terror everywhere. This is a critical time in history. The United Nations is called upon to mobilize all its experience, skills and powers to create concord among nations. That was its founding principle. It is the principle that must continue to drive and sustain the United Nations.

Fiji, as always, is committed to the maintenance of peace and security and to a world free of weapons of mass destruction and terrorism.

We want an end to ozone-depleting pollution and the elimination of other hazards to the environment.

The international community must continue to fight poverty and disease. HIV/AIDS has become more than a health crisis. For some countries it is now a security threat. We in the Pacific have no immunity from this global epidemic. We would welcome continued assistance from the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria to supplement our regional campaign to contain this scourge.

The United Nations must continue to resist external interference in any form, which undermines the sovereign right of every Member State to determine its own destiny. However, where there are internal crises and disorder and the United Nations mandates intervention for peace, we are ready to contribute. We consider it an honour to serve the cause of peace under the flag of the United Nations and regional organizations like the Pacific Islands Forum. Fiji's soldiers and police officers have been taking part in United Nations peacekeeping operations since 1978. That has cost us 35 precious lives, but we remain strong in our resolve to continue serving where we are needed. Peacekeeping personnel from Fiji are working in Liberia, the Sinai, Kosovo, Timor-Leste, the Solomon Islands and Bougainville, Papua New Guinea. My Government is now giving careful consideration to requests from the United Nations to assist it with security personnel in Iraq.

I would like to take this opportunity to express to the United Nations and to those countries that have assisted Fiji on a bilateral basis our gratitude for their help in making it possible for us to honour our commitment to international peace and security.

Through the Pacific Islands Forum, and with the assistance of Australia and New Zealand, we are currently preparing a Pacific plan to pool resources and efforts for the strengthening of collective interests. We will come together to combat the threat of terror and to improve law enforcement and our defences against terrorism and transnational crime. There will be a cooperative approach to social and economic development, and especially for advancing trade, investment and tourism. We will stand united to guard our oceanic heritage, which is a treasure for all humanity.

Our region has the world's largest remaining, sustainable tuna fishery, which is an essential source of food for the global market. But more than 95 per cent of the value of the mid-Pacific Ocean tuna catch goes to distant-water fishing nations. We look to the United Nations and other international organizations to help us get a just return from that major natural resource. Fiji commends those countries that have already worked with us to reach that goal. We would like to express particular thanks to the United States for its regional fisheries treaty with certain Pacific island nations. Our island countries have now entered a new phase of cooperation in the tuna industry through the Western and Central Pacific Tuna Convention, which came into effect in June this year.

In addition to reinforcing regional cooperation, Fiji and its neighbours are giving special attention to their relationships with countries in the wider Asia-Pacific region.

We strongly support a role for Japan and India in an enlarged and strengthened Security Council. May I also add that Fiji would endorse the inclusion of South Africa and Brazil as permanent members.

Let me say that we greatly value the assistance of Australia, New Zealand and the United States in securing our region as a zone of peace.

It was heartening to see the two Koreas marching and participating under a single banner at the Olympic Games in Greece. It is our prayer that that will lead to more substantive progress in the reunification of the Korean people.

We are glad to see the People's Republic of China growing in stature and developing so quickly. Fiji enjoys steadily strengthening relations with China and wants to see those relations expanded further. It is committed to its diplomatic recognition and official relations with the

People's Republic of China. At the same time, Fiji values its trade and economic ties with Taiwan. It is our fervent hope that their people will resolve their future peacefully through dialogue and consensus.

For the past 29 years, close to 80 countries of the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group (ACP) have been the beneficiaries of a historic development partnership with the European Union. I pay tribute to the leaders of Europe and the ACP who pioneered that unique international North-South arrangement. Generous assistance in trade, aid and investment has contributed in very significant ways to the livelihood of millions of people from poorer States.

Now, as we begin negotiations with the European Union for the continuation of those arrangements, we are finding to our dismay that the World Trade Organization's (WTO) insistence on free and open trade will effectively mean for many ACP countries, including Fiji, a massive loss in export earnings from reduced prices. For our sugar industry the direct consequence will inevitably be that the price the cane farmers receive will fall substantially below their production costs. That is despite the urgent and comprehensive reforms we have embarked upon in our sugar industry to make it more productive, efficient and competitive.

Those WTO hurdles are made more difficult by the loss of competitive margins through the withdrawal of schemes like the Generalized System of Preferences. The consequence is that many small island developing States, already disadvantaged by their smallness, distance from export markets and regular devastation from natural disasters, are now faced with serious uncertainty over their economic prospects. We therefore welcome the holding by the United Nations of a special conference of small island developing States early next year to review the Programme of Action for those countries, the Barbados + 10 review. I very much hope that review will lead to new international commitments of assistance to disadvantaged small island developing States. Those commitments must underpin economic survival and a sustainable future, as the world moves inexorably towards a free and open trading system. It is also our hope that the Barbados + 10 review will renew the call for those States that have yet to sign or to ratify the Kyoto Protocol to do so, for the sake of our planet.

My Government commends the initiative taken by the International Labour Organization in its World Commission Report on the Social Dimension of Globalization. It is the international community's responsibility to ensure that for both developed and developing countries, and for big and small countries alike, globalization means a fair and equitable spread of opportunities — opportunities manifested in new investments, more jobs, decent work and improvements in education, health and other social amenities.

For us in the Pacific, as small island nations, there is another area of increased concern. We take great pride in our culture, customs and traditions. They give us our identity and oneness as indigenous communities and as Pacific island peoples. I appeal to the General Assembly to bring before it for adoption at the earliest opportunity the draft declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples. I request the Secretary-General to expedite that process.

While we acknowledge the importance of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international instruments in the promotion of human rights, we also recognize that they are primarily concerned with the rights of individuals. Indigenous Pacific island communities see a United Nations declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples as being vitally important for the international recognition and acceptance of our right to self-determination and, indeed, to our very survival as ethnically and culturally distinct peoples. But that is not to say that we are unconcerned about other communities whose members are fellow citizens with equal rights and responsibilities.

Members of the Assembly are aware that Fiji has a multiracial society. The ethnic Fijians and Rotumans are the indigenous community. Collectively and communally, they own close to 90 per cent of all land in the country. Settlers from India came some 125 years ago and now comprise the majority of tenants of native land. Europeans, people of mixed ancestry, Chinese and other Pacific islanders complete Fiji's colourful cultural tapestry. We are proud of that national diversity. It gives our country its distinctive character and its still unrealized potential.

Although we have learned to co-exist without the racial violence and hatred common elsewhere, we are still a country divided, especially in politics. From independence, in 1970, we tried hard to create multiracialism founded on mutual respect, mutual care and understanding. But, unfortunately, during elections the overwhelming majority of voters still make their choices along ethnic lines. It is not because they are against candidates from other communities, it is just that they find security and comfort in choosing representatives from their own community.

Since my Government came to office, in 2001, we have been engaged in a new quest for unity. Our vision is for a peaceful, unified and prosperous Fiji. Politically, we wish to build on the concept of guaranteed representation for our different communities in Parliament. The challenge now is to extend this to representation in Government.

As a parliamentary democracy, we are committed to Government based on the free will and consent of the people. But, at the same time, we want to ensure that each community has a direct voice in national decision-making. It is that desire for inclusion and equity that has led us to adopt measures to close the social and economic gap between Fijians and the other communities and between the affluent and the disadvantaged and the poor. Increasingly, we are finding that faith in God is a powerful instrument for forming bonds across the racial divide. We may follow different beliefs, but a common focus on the divine is lighting the way forward.

When I return to Fiji, the country will be getting ready for eight days of prayer, forgiveness and reconciliation. The aim is to bring people together and to create a sense of national purpose and patriotism. All the great faiths represented in Fiji will be part of that. Each contains in their teachings the jewels of truth that gleam for all humanity. Each has an important capacity for peace-making. Each can make a valuable contribution to increasing understanding and resolving differences.

In those eight days in October, therefore, our religious leaders will join with other citizens of good will in this fresh search for togetherness. The promotion of unity has been a pressing national priority since my Government came to office, four years ago. We understand that it will not come quickly. The General Assembly will be pleased to hear that our communities themselves, through their religious and cultural organizations, are coming forward to join with the Government in the making of a unified State. The climax of our national week of prayer and forgiveness will be an interfaith service. We recognize that human effort alone is not enough for what we want to achieve.

Just as this great Organization seeks a world of harmony bound together by common ideals, we in Fiji want our own United Nations, a united nation where our citizens live together happily and nationhood is fulfilled.

The President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the Republic of the Fiji Islands for the statement he has just made.

The Honourable Laisenia Qarase, Prime Minister of the Republic of the Fiji Islands, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by The Honourable Roosevelt Skerrit, Prime Minister and Minister for Finance and Carib Affairs of the Commonwealth of Dominica

The President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the by the Prime Minister and Minister for Finance and Carib Affairs of the Commonwealth of Dominica.

The Honourable Roosevelt Skerrit, Prime Minister and Minister for Finance and Carib Affairs of the Commonwealth of Dominica, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President (*spoke in French*): I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency The Honourable Roosevelt Skerrit, Prime Minister and Minister for Finance and Carib Affairs of the Commonwealth of Dominica, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Skerrit (Dominica): Allow me first of all to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the mantle of the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session. My delegation wishes to assure you of its full support and cooperation in bringing about the successful outcome of this session.

My Government expresses its deepest appreciation to your predecessor, Mr. Julian Hunte, for the outstanding manner in which he presided over the work of the fifty-eighth session. Under his visionary leadership, significant progress was made in advancing the revitalization of the General Assembly and in ensuring the return of development to the forefront of the issues addressed by the Assembly.

No words of praise are adequate to describe the yeoman's task undertaken by the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan. In an international environment of turmoil and a world going through the turbulence of economic reconstruction as globalization proceeds, the Secretary-General has remained a clear, calm and moderating influence on all parties to conflict. His level-headed approach has done much to ensure the relevance of the United Nations, which the people of the Commonwealth of Dominica cherish highly.

The numerous challenges facing the globalized world demand a common endeavour from all the nations of the world. Guaranteeing human rights, peace and security and ensuring social and economic justice for all require international cooperation and concerted multilateral action.

Dominica is of the firm conviction that the United Nations continues to be the global institution most suited to the pursuit and coordination of these global initiatives. The multilateral institutions, however, need to be reformed if they are going to be relevant in the current global dispensation.

The coordination of the United Nations effort, in harmony with national efforts, must be the focus of this institution if it is to positively impact on the lives of the majority — the vulnerable and marginalized people of the world.

Dominica is a small island State with all the strengths, as well as the weaknesses, of countries with small economies. That is why we look to the United Nations as a forum in which small countries can air their views, with the aim of collectively influencing the agenda of the Organization in some way.

The central question for all countries in the world today relates to the kind of arrangements that will constitute the economic order when the globalization process is complete. At this stage, globalization consists of a wide variety of treaties, some bilateral and others multilateral. From this slew of agreements, there is yet to be discerned a clear set of principles that address the idiosyncratic features of small island States when they function as economic units.

Within the past six years, the economy of my country has had to withstand a number of shocks — the byproducts of multilateral treaties to which States in situations similar to that of my country have had only a minuscule input. A dispute between the United States of America and the European Union resulted in a ruling by the World Trade Organization that destroyed the banana industry, which was the backbone of the economy of Dominica.

A subsequent decision by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development to publish what has been described as a "blacklist" had a very adverse impact upon the offshore banking sector in my country.

Dominica would like to make a plea for greater transparency and inclusiveness in the formulation of agreements which relate to development financing, trade and international tax matters. Participation ought to be substantive, not a mere formality, which is the case more often than not. We do not subscribe to the notion that mere presence constitutes significant participation.

Notwithstanding our participation in multilateral institutions, the two shocks to which I referred were exogenous — originating outside our country and having nothing to do with the internal economic management of Dominica. A resolute commitment on the part of the resilient population of Dominica, with the timely help of some friendly countries and institutions, saved our country from total disaster.

The lesson, which is abundantly clear to my country and to other small States, is that a new global economic order must be balanced and sensitive to the interests of its weakest members.

The situation of small island developing States will be the focus of attention in January 2005, when the International Meeting to Review the Implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action convenes in Mauritius. The Barbados+10 Meeting will afford us the opportunity to make a full assessment of the Programme of Action and to evaluate its successes and shortcomings.

Dominica and other small island developing States attach great importance to the International Meeting. We hope that it will galvanize the international community to make a greater commitment to provide the critical additional resources necessary for advancing the implementation obligations of the next phase of the Programme of Action.

My country is alarmed at the rise of terrorism in the world. Indeed, as we move towards a more united world where people of different races and colours are called upon to demonstrate greater respect and tolerance for each other, violent attempts at solutions are counterproductive and have the unintended consequence of harming mere bystanders.

The brutal and bloody terrorist acts of 11 September 2001, committed in New York City, not only had reverberations for relatives, friends and the society in general in which the brutal murders took place, but also had serious repercussions of an economic nature in places quite distant from the scene of the crime.

That notorious event had a very deleterious effect upon the Dominican economy. It drastically contracted our tourist industry, which has yet to recover fully. The focus on terrorism and the cost of complying with requirements to prevent terrorist attacks in a region that is renowned as a zone of peace are challenging our commitment to social and economic development.

Every cent spent on addressing this threat is a cent taken from our campaign to sustain the fight against trafficking in narcotic drugs and human beings, the pandemic of HIV/AIDS and other communicable diseases and the degradation of our common environment. Water security, food security, energy security and health security are other important goals that stand to suffer if additional resources are not found to pursue them.

Conflicts in various parts of the world are consuming scarce resources that are critically needed for development and poverty alleviation. On the African continent, civil conflicts in the Sudan, Burundi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo are having catastrophic consequences for the lives of large numbers of people. The continuing attention and support of the international community remain important prerequisites in the pursuit of efforts towards conflict resolution.

The Government of Dominica urges an immediate end to attempts to use violence as a solution to the problems of the people of our planet and calls for a greater degree of rationality to be employed as we address the very thorny problems of life today.

We are satisfied that the more rational approach that we are suggesting can solve many problems that have been in existence for generations. Prior to the abolition of apartheid in South Africa, no one would have believed that, after years of bloodshed between the races, a post-apartheid political order could have accommodated dialogue between the races in that country. The South African example shows that when persons of good-will and intellect get together problems can be resolved without recourse to terror and violence. The United Nations has demonstrated its capacity to trigger the peaceful resolution of conflicts in the past, and my Government is persuaded that it can continue to do so if permitted.

I have the great honour to be the Prime Minister of Dominica at the age of 32. We in Dominica subscribe to the view that the young people of any country are its best hope for a brighter future, to be achieved through constructive change. My presence here attests to the commitment of the Dominican nation to treat younger generations not as inexperienced know-nothings, but as people with the potential to excel, to whom we must provide the best tools for ensuring quality leadership. We believe that the early exposure of young people to leadership and positions of responsibility would help to accelerate the process for achieving the goal of a world without prejudice.

I have sought to summarize those issues that are of special concern to small, vulnerable States such as Dominica and others in the Caribbean. In this regard, I cannot overstate the importance of the Assembly taking cognizance of some unique features of island life, particularly in the tropics.

As you are aware, Sir, at this time of the year, small island States in the Caribbean and parts of the North American continent are exposed to the threat of devastating hurricanes. This year, major disasters have occurred on several islands. Unspeakable devastation has taken place in Grenada; Jamaica has suffered substantial loss of life and damage to property; parts of the Cayman Islands were submerged, and the death toll in Haiti and Santo Domingo has been horrendous. In the United States of America, the state of Florida has experienced disaster of immense proportions. The recent experience of natural disasters underscores the importance of the necessity to put in place rehabilitation programmes that would enable destroyed economies to be revived in the minimum time.

The Government of Dominica believes that an insurance fund should be set up under the aegis of the United Nations. States at risk of natural disasters that devastate their economies ought to be able to receive insurance payments to rehabilitate their economies when they are damaged by such natural disasters.

Participation in such an insurance plan would not be a charitable act. Each Member State would be required to pay a premium that is affordable for that country, and the funds accumulated could be used to repair damage done to the economy, especially in cases where the productive sector of a country's economy has been reduced to paralysis.

Events in the last year have underscored that peace and security in the world, social progress and economic prosperity require the consensus of Member States, the strict implementation of universal norms and commitment to multilateral action.

In that regard, the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti deserves the support of all Member States, especially those in the Latin American and Caribbean region. My Government has made an important decision to support the humanitarian efforts to bring stability to the people of Haiti. We remain convinced that only the full implementation of the provisions of Security Council resolution 1542 (2004) will lead to the return of democratic governance in Haiti.

Dominica commends the United Nations for bringing visibility to the problems of the world's indigenous people during the International Decade of the World's Indigenous People. With the impending end of that Decade this year, we urge the world community to maintain the momentum of the Decade and renew its commitment to support the future aspirations of the world's indigenous peoples through greater contributions to the Voluntary Fund for Indigenous Populations.

Consistent with the overriding principle of pursuing universal consensus and our own national development goals, Dominica chose on 24 March 2004 to act in conformity with General Assembly resolution 2758 (XXVI) of 1971 by establishing diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China, thereby honouring the one-China policy.

Dominica lauds the hand of friendship extended and the demonstrated commitment of the People's Republic of China to assisting small developing countries, which are hard-pressed to fulfil their social and economic agendas in the light of the adverse impact of the evolving new world order on their economies.

In the Caribbean region, as in other regions of the world, we are witnessing the devastating impact of the proliferation of small arms. As a consequence, crime rates and civil conflicts are increasing, threatening the stability and the security of developing countries such as mine. We therefore call for the early conclusion of the negotiations on a legally binding international instrument to control the indiscriminate supply of small arms and light weapons to non-State actors.

In conclusion, I reaffirm Dominica's commitment to the United Nations agenda. For us, the United Nations is the embodiment of our collective will to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. Given that those goals will create a new world order that the young people of the world will inherit, I urge that greater numbers of youth be involved at all levels in the decision-making process. That requires a massive educational programme to demystify international relations and motivate more young people to participate and help shape their world.

I wish delegates every success in their deliberations at the fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly.

The President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister and Minister for Finance and Carib Affairs of the Commonwealth of Dominica for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Roosevelt Skerrit, Prime Minister and Minister for Finance and Carib Affairs of the Commonwealth of Dominica, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by The Honourable Maatia Toafa, Acting Prime Minister of Tuvalu

The President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the Acting Prime Minister of Tuvalu.

The Honourable Maatia Toafa, Acting Prime Minister of Tuvalu, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President (*spoke in French*): I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Maatia Toafa, Acting Prime Minister of Tuvalu, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Toafa (Tuvalu): I have the greatest honour to speak on behalf of the people of Tuvalu, who wish me first of all to convey their warmest greetings to this session of the General Assembly. We also extend our sincere congratulations to you, Mr. President, on your election and assure you of our full cooperation.

We congratulate the outgoing President, Mr. Julian Hunte of Saint Lucia, for his excellent leadership. Coming from a small island developing State ourselves, we are proud of the many achievements so ably accomplished under his presidency.

We would also like to extend our warmest gratitude to the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, and his staff for their dedication to the work of the United Nations. The United Nations, through the Secretary-General's High Representative, participated in the Pacific Island Forum Leaders meeting, held in Samoa last month, at which a new strategy for regional cooperation in the Pacific, the Pacific Plan, was considered.

That is highly commendable. Like all Forum members, Tuvalu looks forward to United Nations solidarity and support, bilaterally and through the Pacific Island Forum and other Pacific regional organizations, in order to realize that Pacific initiative.

Tuvalu is privileged and proud to be in this most indispensable body, the United Nations. Our presence here demonstrates our belief in the noble principles and goals of the United Nations. At the same time, however, we are constantly reminded of our responsibilities to all Tuvaluans, who every day worry about their future economic, cultural, environmental and long-term security and survival on our small, isolated and extremely vulnerable islands.

Tuvuluans wonder if the pride of being in the United Nations is commensurate with the many aspired needs of our people. Is there any real value of being at the United Nations to the villagers and local communities, who can barely overcome the limitations posed by the lack of opportunities, marginalization, isolation, economic exclusion and their extreme vulnerability?

It is our strong belief that to maintain its legitimacy and relevance to all, the United Nations needs to reassess its role and functions in order to better reflect the reality of today's world, in line with its principle of sovereign, equitable participation and representation. We therefore support ongoing reforms in the work of the United Nations. In particular, we support the increase in the number of both permanent and non-permanent seats in the Security Council. Expansion, in our view, should be considered on the basis of responsible contribution to international development and peace, and in this vein we would support the allocation of a permanent seat to Japan. We also believe more equitable representation of the developing countries in the non-permanent seats of the Council is vital and long overdue.

Security challenges continue to create worldwide havoc, fear and uncertainty. Terrorist acts, including the unfortunate seizure of a school in Russia, have proven the continued existence of forces bent on undermining the United Nations founding goals of freedom, peace and security. They have also underscored the urgency with which we, the United Nations, must collectively combat these forces.

Tuvalu is fully committed to joining the fight against international terrorism as required by Security Council resolutions. But we would need to seek the assistance of the United Nations and the international community to help us fulfil those requirements, particularly the reporting requirements of those resolutions and of the international anti-terrorism conventions.

Tuvalu recognizes the seriousness of the HIV/AIDS epidemic in relation to the social and economic development and security of Tuvalu and other Pacific island countries. Given our exposure and the level of mobility of our communities, particularly our seafarers who serve on merchant ships worldwide, there is an urgent need for assistance from the international community, such as that provided under the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, in order to combat the threats of the epidemic.

As is widely acknowledged, a serious challenge to Tuvalu and to all small island developing States is our unique vulnerability to external forces. That vulnerability arises not from our own actions but simply from our being islands with small economies, our isolation, our fragmentation and the fragility of our natural environments. These factors taken together translate into significant constraints on development and a severe lack of capacity to cope with the many changes taking place in the world, especially through globalization.

Yet for us in small island developing States, although we witness daily the forces of trade, communications and travel creating a single global community, the problems associated with poverty, lack of opportunity, marginalization and environmental decline continue to plague our efforts. There is a genuine need for the United Nations and the international community to better recognize the special and unique circumstances of small island developing States and their aspirations to participate more equitably in a globalized world.

Sustainable development, particularly for the most disadvantaged and vulnerable developing States, is most crucial. In June, Tuvalu undertook a comprehensive review of its development priorities and adopted a national sustainable development strategy that we call "The Tuvalu Vision 2015", premised on international development agendas, including the review of the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, and aimed at building Tuvalu's resilience in coping with the challenges it faces.

The promotion of good governance, democratic principles and respect for the rule of law is strongly recognized as fundamental to the successful implementation of that strategy. We acknowledge with greatest appreciation the generous support of the Governments of Australia, New Zealand, Ireland, the United Kingdom, Italy and the Republic of China on Taiwan, the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the Asian Development Bank in that exercise. We look forward to partnering with them, and with others in the international community, in the realization of that strategy.

As a poorly resourced small island developing State and a least developed country as well, even our best efforts to escape the cycle of poverty and marginalization are doomed to failure without the meaningful support of the international community, civil society and the private sector. The Millennium Declaration, the Monterrey Consensus and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation have all provided clear road maps for partnerships towards sustainable development. The signposts offered under these road maps will remain mere rhetoric unless they translate into real developments, responsive to the unique needs of small island developing States such as Tuvalu.

It is for these reasons that full and effective implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States is ever so crucial. Tuvalu is very encouraged by the progress so far achieved in the review of the Programme.

However, success in the further implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action will depend entirely on a better appreciation of the unique situation of small island developing States such as Tuvalu, easier access to and the provision of adequate financial and technical resources, development aid and the dissemination of appropriate technology, particularly for new and renewable energy and capacity-building.

In terms of natural resources, Tuvalu is truly a small island country in a big ocean. The Pacific Ocean surrounding our islands provides the vital source of our livelihoods and our economic and social development. Increasingly, however, we are concerned with the real threats of illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing and of ocean pollution from waste, particularly from the trans-shipment of highly radioactive and toxic materials through our region. We seek the understanding of the international community to help us save our oceans and support fully the Pacific Islands Regional Ocean Policy adopted by our Government leaders in 2002.

The overall decline in overseas development assistance in real terms is cause for serious concern. The failure of developed countries to fulfil the United Nations minimum target of providing 0.7 per cent of their gross national product in overseas development assistance to small island developing States translates into lower economic growth as well as a further widening development gap for small island developing States such as Tuvalu. This needs to be addressed urgently.

An important source of financial flows to developing countries, particularly to small island developing States such as Tuvalu, is migrant workers' remittances from developed countries. Indeed, remittances from our overseas workers, and particularly Tuvaluan seafarers serving abroad, provide a substantial source of income, which is so vital for social and economic development in Tuvalu. Tuvalu fully supports giving urgent international attention to the issue of migrant workers' rights, including the maintenance of international standards specifying minimum requirements for certificates of competency and provisions for the safety and security of migrant workers, in order to ensure the continuation of this vital source of capital for SIDS.

The international meeting in Mauritius in January must result in a stronger commitment from the international community and in pragmatic and doable actions on the ground in all small island developing States.

An issue of continuing concern to Tuvalu is the question of the representation of the Republic of China on Taiwan in the United Nations. Regrettably, this Organization cannot be said to be universal without the rightful representation of the 23 million people of the Republic of China on Taiwan. Tuvalu feels that the active and responsible participation of the Republic of China on Taiwan in world affairs — especially in trade, commerce and international development — without representation in the United Nations is unjust and morally wrong and needs to be corrected.

We in Tuvalu, a mere three meters above sea level, live in constant fear of the adverse impact of climate change and the rising sea level. Our livelihoods and sources of food security are already badly affected. With increased ground water salinity, land erosion and coral bleaching, we experience total anxiety. The threat is real and serious and is like a slow and insidious form of terrorism against Tuvalu.

Tuvalu, therefore, accords significant importance to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and its Kyoto Protocol, as they provide the most appropriate global framework to reducing greenhouse gas emissions. We congratulate the Framework Convention secretariat as the Convention marks its tenth anniversary this year. However, we are deeply concerned by the failure and the lack of leadership on the part of industrialized countries in the implementation of commitments and in the ratification and enforcing of the Kyoto Protocol.

We in small island developing States recognize that all nations must take steps to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions at some stage. However, Tuvalu believes that the Kyoto Protocol must be the first step in this direction for now and for setting the way forward in the future. The Protocol as such must enter into force without delay. However, the industrialized countries must act first as it is their legacy of emissions that is creating the problems of today. Actions must also include assisting small island developing States in their adaptation to the adverse effects of climate change, particularly in terms of urgently providing adequate financial and technical resources in line with the responsibilities and obligations under the Framework Convention.

As we mark the tenth anniversary of the Framework Convention, and as we begin to explore future actions against climate change and sea-level rise, we appeal for more attention from the United Nations, whose raison d'être is to ensure world peace and security, and for stronger leadership by the international community against this global threat.

In conclusion, we want to say that efforts aimed at the sustainable development of small island States like Tuvalu will have no meaning unless the issue of climate change and sea level is addressed decisively and with urgency. Tuvalu's interest in enforcing Kyoto is not self-serving. The more serious consequences of not acting now, as we are already witnessing the world over, will be felt everywhere.

It is our hope that, out of this common house of our United Nations family, there will emerge better understanding and goodwill for the long-lasting security and survival of Tuvalu, of SIDS and of the whole world.

God bless the United Nations.

The President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Acting Prime Minister of Tuvalu for the statement he has just made.

The Honourable Maatia Toafa, Acting Prime Minister of Tuvalu, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by The Honourable Winston Baldwin Spencer, Prime Minister and Minister of Labour of Antigua and Barbuda

The President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister and Minister of Labour of Antigua and Barbuda.

The Honourable Winston Baldwin Spencer, Prime Minister and Minister of Labour of Antigua and Barbuda, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President (*spoke in French*): I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency The Honourable Winston Baldwin Spencer, Prime Minister and Minister of Labour of Antigua and Barbuda, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Spencer (Antigua and Barbuda): I stand before the General Assembly of the United Nations with an equal measure of pride and humility.

Of the more than 190 nations that make up the United Nations, Antigua and Barbuda is among the smallest in population and land mass. In the face of these strikingly modest statistics, my humility in standing at this renowned and universally respected podium will be readily understood. The fact that

Antigua and Barbuda is accorded the privilege to address the United Nations today is obvious cause for pride.

On a personal note, I have just completed my first six months as Prime Minister in the first term of the party that was elected to govern Antigua and Barbuda on 23 March of this year. It is, therefore, a particular pleasure and a special personal privilege for me to be afforded this opportunity to take the podium at the fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly.

I take this opportunity to express my appreciation to the Secretary-General for the kind sentiments he graciously extended on the formation of my Government. Considering that a single party had ruled Antigua and Barbuda throughout the life of our 23-year old nation, and for some considerable time prior to that, my leadership and my Government are still in a tender state of infancy. I therefore trust that, should I be guilty of any lapse in protocol during my remarks, you will blame it on my innocence.

The removal of a long-entrenched Government makes 2004 a year of dramatic change and intimidating challenge for Antigua and Barbuda. The United Nations human development index ranks Antigua and Barbuda in the high development scale. By virtue of our per-capita income, Antigua and Barbuda is designated a middle-income country.

Though it is self-evident that all countries are not created equal, it is a fundamental purpose of the United Nations to ensure a level playing field in the arena in which small as well as large nations of the world engage one another. I say this despite overwhelming empirical evidence that size and might often come into play without subtlety, without apology and sometimes without sufficiently vigorous challenge in the affairs of the United Nations.

The structure of the Security Council dramatizes the reality that one nation, one vote, still has its limitations. In this context, we might be tempted to accept, as Nobel Laureate V. S. Naipul asserts in the opening line of his book, *A Bend in the River*: "The world is what it is". I submit that the overarching mission of the United Nations is to defy the status quo and to work unrelentingly to transform the world from what it is into what it can be. The logical and particularly relevant concomitance to all of this is that a fundamental function of the United Nations is to assist small Member States like Antigua and Barbuda to be all that we can be. We recognize that the United Nations has been making every conceivable effort to meet this mandate, most notably so under the stewardship of our indomitable Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Kofi Annan.

Not surprisingly, small societies like those of the English-speaking Caribbean have become casualties, not beneficiaries, of globalization and of the new world economic order. The United Nations acknowledged this in the Millennium Declaration. The Declaration concedes that, while globalization offers great opportunities, its benefits are very unevenly shared, while its costs are unevenly distributed. It recognized that developing countries and countries with economies in transition face special difficulties in responding to the challenges of globalization.

The Millennium Declaration defined the need for policies and measures at the global level that correspond to the needs of developing countries and economies in transition and that are formulated and implemented with their effective participation. It recognized a collective responsibility to uphold the principles of human dignity, equality and equity at the global level. It affirmed a determination to deal comprehensively and effectively with the debt problems of low and middle-income developing countries through various national and international measures designed to make their debt sustainable in the long term.

Still, the reality confronts us that the views of all other United Nations Member States are outweighed by those of the five permanent members of the Security Council.

Moreover, the world saw, not all that long ago, effective marginalization of the United Nations in defiance of rational concerns, strongly expressed, of the general membership of the United Nations. I have no desire to be trampled underfoot by the elephants engaged in the historic battle that raged in this forum before it moved to its still active theatre in the Middle East earlier this year. I am, however, compelled to wonder by what process the United Nations appears to have ruled out a negotiated resolution of the ongoing war in Iraq as an option.

It is lamentable that, in meeting the unique needs of vulnerable small States and microeconomies, the United Nations is routinely sidelined in international trading relationships and development processes. The United Nations is not recognized as a key catalyst in defining the world economic order and international trading arrangements in the twenty-first century. That agenda is understood to be directed by entities such as the World Trade Organization, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the Financial Action Task Force, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. Two of those organizations are assemblies of a small number of wealthy nations that do not necessarily attach adequate priority to the vulnerability of small States and economies in transition.

We are not all convinced that those organizations, whose decisions can well determine the destiny of small States like Antigua and Barbuda — and the now desolate Grenada and Haiti — are sufficiently responsive to the special needs of small Caribbean States.

Indeed, the instances in which small countries of the Caribbean have been targets of the OECD and the mighty United States are vivid in our consciousness. Super Power intervention in traditional arrangements between Europe and the Caribbean for bananas and sugar has been no less devastating, and it has certainly been farther reaching than Hurricane Ivan's savage demolition of Grenada. The OECD offensive against what were termed "harmful tax jurisdictions", manifestly discriminated against international financial centres in the Caribbean. Our responses to this challenge were responsible and effective.

We would like to think that the English-speaking Caribbean countries are model nations in the family of man. We represent a zone of peace in a world shattered by internecine and international wars. We maintain exemplary parliamentary democracies. With a few sad exceptions, we in the Caribbean change our Governments by the ballot, and by no other means.

Though we are small, we are overwhelming in human worth. The Commonwealth Caribbean gave Bob Marley to the world. We gave Nobel Laureates Arthur Lewis, Derek Walcott and Vidia Naipaul to the world. We have given our music to the world in the form of reggae, calypso, soca and steel band. We have enriched the cuisines of the world. We have given the fastest female track athletes to the world. We have contributed to the standard of academia around the world through the export of many of our finest minds.

We have been blessed with the most desirable beaches in the world, and we welcome the world to share our beaches and our incomparable natural environment. Our islands represent green points of light on a globe convulsed by callous attitudes to the environment among certain developed countries, and among countries in transition, as well.

Small though our nations may be, we are mighty warriors in strong and effective alliances with the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom and other nations in the war against the international narcotics syndicates.

I deem it my country's civic responsibility to remind this body of our duty to fulfil our role as outlined in the preamble of the United Nations Charter, to be the central area for harmonizing the actions of nations in achieving international cooperation in solving issues of a humanitarian nature.

Today two nations within the Caribbean region, Grenada and Haiti, have been devastated by natural disaster. Some 90 per cent of Grenada's housing stock has been destroyed. Civil society is in deep trauma. The economy has been wiped out and the Government is completely immobilized. This means that there is an ineffective authority.

More than 1,000 persons have just died in Haiti in the wake of Hurricane Jean, with the figure expected to double in days. The dead are being buried in mass graves to prevent a health epidemic. Homes and crops have been destroyed, with floodwater lines on buildings measuring up to 10 feet high. Survivors in Haiti's third largest city, Gonaives, are hungry, thirsty and increasingly desperate. United Nations peacekeepers and aid agencies are stretched to the limit.

Grenada and Haiti are now suffering a condition comparable to a massive military bombardment. Against this backdrop, I urge the United Nations — every nation, large and small — to intervene in those two Caribbean countries devastated by recent hurricanes. They are certifiable disaster areas.

An adequate response from all of us, and even more so from the developed countries, to the plight of Grenada and Haiti would be a quantum leap to recovery and reconstruction for them and the best option to ease the suffering of their battered and distressed people. We must act quickly. We must act now.

If I may be so bold, I would like to say that my country, Antigua and Barbuda, is a veritable United Nations in microcosm. It has become home to a relatively larger proportion of immigrants from Caribbean countries than has any other Caribbean

State. On any day, on any street in St. John's, Antigua and Barbuda's capital, you will hear virtually every Caribbean inflection, English and Hispanic. You will also hear accents from China, Syria, Lebanon, Europe and Africa. Indeed, we are celebrating Antigua and Barbuda's unique diversity with the construction of a Caribbean Festival Park that will be a permanent showcase and celebration of the essence of the entire Caribbean region.

I have chosen to use this opportunity to urge the United Nations General Assembly to petition powerful nations and agencies of the world for a review of the policy of penalizing small States that achieve a measure of success in the process of guiding their economies to growth and their citizens to better lives. Is it not ironic that, only in the area of development funding, achieving "graduation" is rewarded with punishment? Development funding dries up; technical aid is more difficult to access when small States begin to show signs of prosperity. The effect of this is really to pull out the carpet from under small States the moment they stand up. Small developing States will never be insulated against external shocks.

The international security measures mandated by America's post-9/11 Patriot Act have inflicted an inordinate financial burden on the small economies of Caribbean member States. We have been compelled to finance security infrastructure for which we had no provisions. With intensified security concerns in the United States, Caribbean countries are confronted with increasing waves of deported felons from the United States. This carries the risk that, among these deportees, there might well be prime recruits for organized crime and narco-trafficking. Caribbean societies are simply not equipped to respond effectively to those challenges.

Among member countries of the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States, Antigua and Barbuda is considered to be relatively affluent. The grim reality is that Antigua and Barbuda is confronted with an economy that has been experiencing sustained decline. The country has been accumulating crippling debt. We are uncovering disturbing levels of unemployment, particularly among our young people. This can well place a significant proportion of our youth at serious risk.

Many of these concerns are common to small States of the Caribbean. Policies and rules are made in organizations controlled by the powerful few. This brings us to the contradiction that, as small States strive to be all that we can be, we are penalized for our success.

Policy makers in the developed world, donor countries and multilateral donor agencies should not take our natural and physical attributes as barometers of our economic and social development.

In this age of globalization, where the emphasis is on bigness, being small is definitely a disadvantage of major magnitude. Small economies cannot easily diversify production. Jobs are concentrated in a limited number of industries — namely, agriculture, tourism and services. Tragically, we are now encountering a situation where our unemployed young people are easily induced into the drug trade.

Given that the Caribbean region is a recognized drug trans-shipment point between Latin America and the United States and Europe, the attraction of easy money and effective marketing to youth by drug dons make this job opportunity very attractive to the youth of the Caribbean region.

My party, the United Progressive Party, campaigned on a platform of transparency, accountability and integrity in every functional aspect of government, and throughout the society as a whole. As a demonstration of my Government's seriousness in combating corruption, I tabled anticorruption and integrity legislation in our Parliament during our first six months in Government.

My Government and the majority of the people of Antigua and Barbuda are committed to every option that will support our dedication to good governance in our country.

I challenge the United Nations to stand by the tenets of the Millennium Declaration, which call for equity among nations, large and small. There is a compelling reason for this call.

Caribbean Community (CARICOM) countries are currently engaged in three separate sets of negotiations that will seriously impact the economies of our countries and the welfare of our people. To date, there have been no concessions afforded to the special needs of small States in our negotiations with the European Union, on the Free Trade Area of the Americas and with the World Trade Organization. Not everyone engaged in these negotiations appears to be in sympathy with the fundamental goals of the United Nations Millennium Declaration.

If affirmative action is not to be proffered to Antigua and Barbuda and other small States of the Caribbean region and the world, let us at least be spared punitive suspension of whatever special facilities enabled us to move our economies forward.

Antigua and Barbuda thanks this General Assembly for the opportunity to propose that, in keeping with the letter and the spirit of the United Nations Millennium Declaration, small States, such as those of CARICOM, should be afforded the promised opportunity to be beneficiaries of globalization and the new world economic architecture, instead of leaving us casualties, as we must now be accurately described.

The President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister and Minister of Labour of Antigua and Barbuda for the statement he has just made.

The Honourable Winston Baldwin Spencer, Prime Minister and Minister of Labour of Antigua and Barbuda, was escorted from the rostrum.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now call on His Excellency Shaikh Mohammed bin Mubarak Al-Khalifa, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Bahrain.

Shaikh Mohammed bin Mubarak Al-Khalifa (Bahrain) (*spoke in Arabic*): Mr. President, at the outset, I have the pleasure to extend my most sincere congratulations and best wishes to you and your friendly country of Gabon on the occasion of your election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session and to wish you every success in your work. May I take this opportunity to thank your predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Julian Hunte, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the friendly country of Saint Lucia, for the intensive efforts he exerted during his presidency of the last session.

I also would like to take this opportunity to express my country's appreciation to Secretary-General Kofi Annan for the great efforts he has made to enhance and strengthen the role of the United Nations in maintaining international peace and security.

Since the signing of the Charter in 1945 in San Francisco, the United Nations has played a vital role in addressing many international political, economic, social and humanitarian issues.

Our world today is witnessing the interlinking of different issues in politics and in regional and international security with other issues of development, the environment, culture, women and human rights. As a result, international interests have become interwoven and the distinction between local and international questions has almost vanished in light of the spread of globalization. People need the United Nations now more than they did a half a century ago. With newly developed understanding, they have a greater day-to-day need to keep up with the modern developments of the twenty-first century and the spirit of the age, led by multilateral diplomacy, which looks at both present and inherited problems from a new practical perspective and understanding. The idea of reforming the United Nations, including the collective security system, is indeed an ambitious one. However, we believe that its implementation is not an impossible dream but a necessity. The international community must respond, through innovative thinking, practical methods and a collective determination, in order to achieve democracy in international relations, maintain the spirit of the Charter, and devise practical solutions to national and regional conflicts and mitigate their consequences for the development process in Member States.

In that context, we would like to reiterate our support for the efforts made by the Secretary-General to reform the Organization and enhance its capacity to shoulder its responsibilities and carry out it missions.

We look forward with great interest to the report that the Secretary-General will present in December on the outcome of the meetings of the High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change. We hope that these results and recommendations will not only meet the hopes of the peoples of the world but will also be sufficient to address the threats and problems that beset international relations on all sides.

As reform and modernization of the United Nations have become a goal for the majority of its Members, by the same token, leaders and political experts in many parts of the world, including the Arab world, have become aware that reform and modernization are important issues in their societies in order to address the demands for change and the movement of history, and that these issues must be addressed with clear-sightedness and wisdom, to meet the hopes and aspirations of the new generation for progress and democratization.

As a result of that historic political awareness, the reform and democratization process has made great strides in the Kingdom of Bahrain. Bahrain has moved rapidly in the building of democracy and the widening of popular participation since the adoption of the National Action Charter by the people of Bahrain on 14 February 2001, and municipal and parliamentary elections in 2002.

It is clear that the call for reform and democratization, which has become an important contemporary element in international policy, has become a demand of both industrialized countries and of many developing countries as well. This year, the President of the Group of Eight invited His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al-Khalifa, the King of Bahrain, to participate in its annual Summit held in Georgia, United States, from 8 to 10 June last, in recognition of His Majesty's important role in the reform process and the building of democracy in Bahrain.

The phenomenon of terrorism is a source of concern for the international community, because of its horrific spread to many different parts of the world. Indeed, no region or country is immune. In that regard, Bahrain reaffirms its condemnation of terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, regardless of its sources or motivation. We reassert that there can be no justification whatsoever for terrorism, and that terrorist acts are not condoned by any religion or belief.

Bahrain has condemned, and continues to condemn, terrorist acts against countries and peoples through which innocent lives are lost, and reaffirms its solidarity with the brotherly Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and its support for all measures it has taken to overcome these criminal actions, which contradict the principles and tenets of Islam, a religion of tolerance and mercy. Bahrain also condemns and denounces all terrorist acts around the world, including the events at the school in Beslan, North Ossetia, in Russia.

In examining terrorism and its threats, it is necessary to review its causes in order to limit its destructive danger. Among those causes, we find poverty, ignorance, backwardness, unemployment, a culture of extremism, fundamentalism, ethnic prejudice, feelings of national desperation and frustration, and violations of human rights.

To address this terrorist phenomenon, and within the framework of regional and international cooperation to fight it, Bahrain and the other countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) this year signed the GCC Anti-Terrorism Agreement, a further step in overcoming this scourge, which must be eradicated.

Israel is increasing its oppressive measures and practices in the occupied territories against the Palestinian people. It does not respect or comply with international law and international legality by taking areas of Palestinian land in its construction of the so-called barrier, which consolidates the occupation and the settlements, and extinguishes hopes for an independent Palestinian State — the legal and inalienable right of the Palestinian people.

The international community today must take a courageous stand in the face of these actions, in particular following the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice delivered on 9 July 2004, and General Assembly resolution ES-10/15 of 20 July 2004, which represent a triumph for international legality and a clear condemnation of the building of the separation wall, which contradicts the principles of international law. The international community must use that opinion to pressure Israel to end its occupation of all Palestinian and Arab territories, including the Syrian Golan Heights and the Lebanese Shaba'a Farms.

The Arab countries reaffirm their commitment to the Arab peace initiative agreed at the Beirut Summit in 2002, and reaffirmed by the most recent Arab Summit in Tunis in 2004, which calls for a complete Israeli withdrawal from all occupied Arab land and the establishment of an independent Palestinian State with Jerusalem as its capital, in accordance with the resolutions of international legality, in particular Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973), 1397 (2002) and 1515 (2003).

We call once again on the Quartet to resume its efforts to promote the peace process, and we demand that the Government of Israel fulfil its obligations under the peace plan, as set out in the road map.

The situation in brotherly Iraq remains a continued source of concern for the countries and peoples of the region, in particular the violence and insecurity that threaten it, despite continued efforts to maintain peace, especially following the establishment of the Interim Government, which took office on 28 June 2004, and in spite of the transfer of sovereignty to Iraqi authorities, the convening of the national conference and steps taken towards the creation of an interim National Legislative Council.

The upcoming stage requires that a vital and effective role be played by the international community, represented by the United Nations, which will bear the heavy burden of supporting the interim Iraqi Government and helping it to fulfil the tasks required of it under Security Council resolution 1546 (2004).

Bahrain has on more than one occasion expressed its support for efforts to maintain peace and security in Iraq, and to create the conditions for the reconstruction of the country and the maintenance of its unity. It also reaffirmed its willingness to participate in Arab and international efforts to rebuild Iraq and to maintain its unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity.

The security and stability of the Arab Gulf region is a matter of great concern to the Government of Bahrain, which is constantly seeking peace and stability in a region that has suffered greatly during the past three decades. The Kingdom of Bahrain, which is a member of the Arab Gulf Cooperation Council, calls upon the Islamic Republic of Iran to work to peacefully resolve the issue of the islands of Greater Tunb, Lesser Tunb and Abu Musa, which belong to the United Arab Emirates, either through serious bilateral negotiations aimed at an agreement between the two neighbouring countries or by arbitration.

Given the Kingdom of Bahrain's follow-up of efforts to achieve peace and reconciliation and to re-establish stability in important regions of the Arab world, we welcomed the Naivasha Agreement between the Government of the Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Army. We are anxious to see an end to the civil war there, which has taken a great toll in terms of human life and material resources. Bahrain also welcomed the agreement between the Sudan and the United Nations aimed at ending the bloodshed in the Darfur region, as well as the steps taken by the Sudanese Government to implement its obligations in accordance with the agreement that it signed with the Secretary-General on 3 July.

Bahrain also expresses its support for the efforts of the African Union, which is working with the Sudanese Government with a view to resolving the humanitarian crisis in Darfur. We affirm the importance of respecting the Sudan's sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity. We call on the Security Council to give the Government of the Sudan sufficient time to deal with the crisis and offer the necessary financial assistance to bring it to an end.

Mr. Khan (Bangladesh), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Today more than ever we are committed to the principles and purposes of the Charter. We now have a deeper understanding of the need for a modernized and more advanced Organization that is capable of taking part in collective international action, of responding to the changes and challenges of the twenty-first century and of ensuring greater democracy in international relations, equal rights among the peoples of the world and equal sovereignty among States. It must also be able to arrive at solutions for problems that may occur in the future on the basis of international partnership, so that any as yet unforeseen challenges facing humanity in the coming decades can be dealt with.

Past mistakes and current failures should not divert us from our ambitions for a better future — a future free from the scourge of war, a future of peace and justice, where human rights and the dignity of the individual are respected; a future where resources are developed and where society can progress, where greed has been eliminated and where countries cooperate within an advanced international order that promotes the rule of law and disseminates the values of human rights, generosity and justice, without prejudice, arrogance or discrimination.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade of the Republic of Korea.

Mr. Ban (Republic of Korea): I would like first of all to extend my sincere congratulations to Mr. Jean Ping on his assumption of the presidency of General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session. I have every confidence that he will meet with distinction the challenges of his eminent office. I would also like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to his predecessor, Mr. Julian Robert Hunte, as well as to Secretary-General Kofi Annan.

The past year has been marked by a series of atrocious terrorist attacks. The stark reality is that no people or nation is safe from the spectre of international terrorism. Through their cowardly acts, terrorists seek to generate chaos and fear, raining violence upon the innocent — even children, as we so painfully and clearly witnessed in the recent tragedy in Beslan, Russia. I would like to take this opportunity to extend my sincere sympathy to all those affected by terrorist attacks around the world.

The Republic of Korea has been no exception in its exposure to heinous terrorist attacks. In particular, we experienced, with deep sorrow and pain, the loss of a Korean — a victim of such savagery — in Iraq in June this year. There can be no justification whatsoever for such brutality and cruel disregard for human life. That inhuman act has only bolstered our determination to rid the world of the dark cloud of terrorism. The Republic of Korea remains firm in its conviction that the international community must never give in to the demands of terrorists.

The fight against terrorism calls for unity in the international community, with the United Nations in the lead, as well as the enhanced ability of each individual Member State to combat terrorism.

Iraq still remains a very pressing security concern for the international community. The inauguration of an interim Government and the transfer of sovereignty set in motion the process of political transition towards a new era of democracy for the Iraqi people. The United Nations has a wealth of experience to offer Iraq in the process of its political normalization and national rehabilitation. The transition cannot proceed smoothly, however, without the restoration of order. To that end, the assistance of the international community is vital.

The Republic of Korea has been actively participating in international efforts to build a peaceful, democratic and prosperous Iraq. We strongly believe that stability in Iraq is vital for peace and security in the Middle East and beyond. In implementation of Security Council resolutions 1511 (2003) and 1546 (2004), we are in the process of dispatching 3,600 troops to the multinational forces in Iraq. The aim of this is to assist the Iraqi people's efforts aimed at rehabilitation and reconstruction. We have also pledged to contribute $260 million to that end, focusing on areas such as health, education, capacity-building, job creation and the provision of electricity.

Terrorism lends renewed urgency to our common endeavour to halt the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery. In particular, this year's revelations about a nuclear black-market network in Asia have alerted the international community to the danger of nuclear weapons falling into terrorist hands. Faced with this new kind of threat to nuclear non-proliferation, the international community must work to close the loopholes in the existing non-proliferation regime. Against that backdrop, my Government strongly supports Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) on non-proliferation, adopted by the Council in April this year.

The Republic of Korea has actively participated in the efforts of the international community in the non-proliferation field. In February this year, we became the thirty-ninth country to ratify the Additional Protocol to the Safeguards Agreement. In June, we joined the Group of Eight (G8) Global Partnership against the Spread of Weapons and Materials of Mass Destruction in order to support joint efforts to stem the spread of deadly arsenals. We held the chairmanship of the Nuclear Suppliers Group for the year 2003-2004, and we will also host the plenary meeting of the Missile Technology Control Regime in Seoul next month. These are just a few facts that attest to my Government's unwavering commitment to the cause of the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

Given such a solid commitment on our part, my Government reported the recent discoveries about past scientific experiments involving nuclear materials in my country pursuant to the additional protocol to the safeguards agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). The experiments were isolated, laboratory-scale research activities that a few scientists conducted on their own for purely experimental purposes. In good faith and with full transparency, my Government has been providing full cooperation to the IAEA in its activities to review and verify our declarations on nuclear research activities.

Renewing and reaffirming our commitment to nuclear non-proliferation and the peaceful use of nuclear energy, the Government of the Republic of Korea announced the following "Four Principles for the Peaceful Use of Nuclear Energy" on 18 September 2004.

First, the Republic of Korea reaffirms that it has no intention of developing or possessing nuclear weapons. Secondly, the Republic of Korea will firmly maintain nuclear transparency and will strengthen our cooperation with the international community to this end. Thirdly, the Republic of Korea will faithfully abide by the norms set out in agreements on nuclear non-proliferation, including the Treaty on the Non-

Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and the Joint Declaration on the Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. Fourthly, on the basis of international trust and with the highest level of transparency, the Republic of Korea will continue to expand the peaceful use of nuclear energy.

I would now like to turn to one of the most important tasks that lie ahead: resolving the North Korean nuclear issue. The Government of the Republic of Korea has been actively engaged in the efforts to bring about a peaceful resolution to this issue through the six-party talks process. The Republic of Korea firmly believes that the expeditious resolution of the North Korean nuclear issue is in the best interests of all the participants in the six-party talks, including the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. The resolution of this issue will certainly have a positive impact on the global nuclear non-proliferation regime. It will also have a profound effect on the relations between North Korea and the other countries participating in the six-party talks.

Upon the resolution of the nuclear issue, North Korea would indeed be able to become a full-fledged member of the international community, enabling it to gain all the accompanying benefits. It is our fervent wish that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea will make a strategic decision to forgo all its nuclear-weapon programmes, including its uranium enrichment programmes, in a thorough and transparent manner. The Government of the Republic of Korea also strongly hopes that the fourth round of talks will be held as soon as possible, so that we can engage in substantive discussions on concrete steps toward the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula.

While seeking a peaceful resolution to the North Korean nuclear issue, the Korean Government is working hard to ensure the steady improvement of inter-Korean relations. Indeed, Government-level meetings have been institutionalized and as many as 90 such meetings have been held over the past two years. Impressive progress is also being made on major projects for economic cooperation. In particular, the start of operations at the Gaesong industrial complex, scheduled for later this year, will be a significant achievement in inter-Korean cooperation.

As a result of such efforts, we believe that inter-Korean exchanges and cooperation have now advanced to a point from which there is no turning back. The rise of such inter-Korean interaction and interdependence will certainly contribute to peace and prosperity on the Korean peninsula and beyond.

There are no easy answers to the many problems the world now faces, and poverty is at the top of that list. The roots of poverty run deep, with no simple solution in sight. A large part of the human population still languishes in abject poverty, presenting a serious stumbling block to the achievement of our shared goal of lasting peace and prosperity for all.

Four years ago, the leaders of the world pledged to reduce by half the proportion of people living in poverty and hunger by the year 2015 as part of the Millennium Development Goals. However, at this point, the gap between the objectives and the tangible progress we have made remains wide. It is our sincere hope that the 2005 high-level meeting to review the progress made in the implementation of the Goals will serve to renew our commitment to the world's poor. Political will is the key.

Over the past year, the United Nations has continued its efforts to realize our common aspirations for the promotion of human rights, freedom and well-being. While persevering in its quest to make human rights universal, the United Nations has exerted special efforts to enable the most vulnerable of our fellow human beings to enjoy the rights and freedoms that should be guaranteed to all. In particular, much progress has been made in the endeavours to draft a convention to promote the rights of persons with disabilities.

The Government of the Republic of Korea strongly supports global action to strengthen the values of human rights and democracy around the world. Just last week in Seoul, we organized a seminar on good governance practices for the promotion of human rights, in conjunction with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the United Nations Development Programme.

Next year in Seoul, my Government will also host the Sixth Global Forum on Reinventing Government, in cooperation with the United Nations. We are convinced that this Forum will serve as a useful venue for the exchange of experience in Government innovations aimed at enhancing participation and transparency in governance.

We also support the United Nations in reaching out to people in distress in many corners of the world and providing life-saving assistance to millions of refugees and others displaced by conflicts and natural disasters. We share the concern of the international community over the humanitarian crisis unfolding in Darfur, Sudan. Security Council resolution 1564 (2004) should be implemented so as to bring back peace and stability to this troubled area and its inhabitants.

Furthermore, all too often, the complexities of major crises have been fuelled by the public health emergency created by the HIV/AIDS pandemic. In order to overcome the scourge of HIV/AIDS, it is vital that we strengthen the global assistance mechanisms. In this regard, the 3 by 5 Initiative of the World Health Organization, aimed at providing antiretroviral treatment to 3 million infected people by the year 2005, is a very timely and proactive initiative.

For almost six decades, the United Nations has played a crucial role in merging the diverse interests of our Member States for the global good. As the international community becomes more interdependent and areas of cooperation expand further in the twenty-first century, the world body will have an even greater role to play.

Meanwhile, doubts have been expressed as to whether the current United Nations system is suitable for confronting the challenges of the new century. As the Secretary-General has pointed out, the United Nations has come to a fork in the road. Choices must be made if the United Nations is to be strengthened and made more effective.

In that regard, the Republic of Korea hopes that the High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change established on the recommendation of the Secretary-General will identify the challenges the international community faces and recommend ways to deal with them effectively. We look forward to the Panel's report and hope that its recommendations will shed light on ways to make the United Nations more effective and responsive to the needs of the twenty-first century.

No doubt, continued reform of the United Nations will be an important part of our discussions. In particular, the Security Council, as the primary organ for maintaining peace and security, must be reformed in such a way as to make it more representative and democratic than it is today. In that regard, we share the view that the Security Council should be expanded to adequately reflect the increase in the membership of the United Nations during the past decades. Expansion of the Security Council should be designed to enable more countries to participate in the Council more often, and on the basis of a more equitable geographical distribution. In that spirit, we support an increase in non-permanent members so as to accord to those Member States willing and able to contribute to international peace and security greater opportunities to serve in the Council.

As diverse as they are, there is a common thread that holds together all the views expressed in this honourable Hall. We are all united in the goal of seeking a better and more peaceful world. Now more than ever, countries are called to rise to challenges together, as Members of our one global body. The Republic of Korea stands firm in its hopes for and belief in the United Nations as the steadfast anchor for our collective endeavours and remains as committed as ever to fully playing its part in all areas of its noble work.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. George Yeo, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Singapore.

Mr. Yeo (Singapore): First, I would like to congratulate His Excellency Mr. Jean Ping of Gabon, on his election as the President of the General Assembly.

We meet in New York under conditions of high security. All over the world, Governments, corporations and individuals are allocating vast resources to combat terrorism. The Beslan massacre last month and the Jakarta bombing two weeks ago remind us once again that the war against terrorism is a long struggle. Fighting it requires us to cooperate worldwide. It is also important for us to understand more deeply why terrorists are prepared to sacrifice their own lives to take the lives of others, including those of innocent children.

The human condition has not changed. There is in human beings a restless, competitive spirit that strives to get ahead, make discoveries and order or reorder the world according to their values and world-view. It is a drive that can lead to great good or great evil.

The greatest evil is often committed out of a sense of self-righteousness. That has been the case throughout history. Al Qaeda carries out its actions in the name of Islam, which is a gross perversion. Religious wars are the most cruel because human beings are maimed and killed in the name of the divine. Ethnic and ideological conflicts sometimes turn genocidal when one side believes that right is completely on its side.

Unrestrained economic competition can also lead to grave injustice. Without rules, ruthless economic competition will return us to the jungle. Without the World Trade Organization (WTO), globalization can become a tool with which the strong can dominate the weak, just as in an earlier period entire continents were carved up by imperial Powers.

Global organizations like the United Nations and WTO give us hope that this century can be more civilized than previous ones. We need rules that put limits on our competitiveness in the political and economic arenas. As in the Olympic Games, clear rules and their rigorous enforcement enable individuals to compete fiercely and triumph within a framework of sportsmanship and fairness. The rules are not there to dampen our natural competitive spirit, but to direct it towards positive achievement.

But the rules have to be determined by common agreement. Their legitimacy is derived from the shared values that bind participants together. They have to evolve, along with our evolving sense of what is fair and proper. They cannot be imposed. If they are imposed, what we have will not be the Olympics but the gladiatorial pits of the Roman Colosseum.

At the most fundamental level, discussions and debates in the United Nations and WTO are really about the values that bind us together as human beings. As the world grows smaller, our sense of interdependence grows. As we interact more, we discover that we are more similar than we think. So many problems like global warming, epidemics and terrorism can only be overcome if we work together. So many new opportunities can only be fully exploited if we combine our efforts.

Yes, we have become closer. We celebrated together when for the first time the human genome was mapped a few years ago. We grieved as one on 11 September 2001. The slaughter of children at Beslan outraged us all. But will we ever be the same? That is not possible. It is neither in our biological nature nor in the nature of the historical process for human societies to converge and become identical. Even the same society changes over time in response to changing conditions.

There is in each and everyone of us a deep desire to be free, to experiment and to be better than others around us. Like all forms of energy, human energy must be channelled so that it is constructive and not destructive. That is the challenge of governance at all levels, from the village all the way to global institutions. With the world becoming a village because of the ease of travel and instant communication, the design of global institutions is very important. They help us solve problems which we cannot solve individually and set limits on acceptable behaviour.

The problem of Palestine, for example, cannot be solved without the participation of the larger global community. All of us are aware of the rights and wrongs, and sometimes particular issues are right or wrong, depending on our perspective. However, we should never lose hope. We should always look for new and creative ways to break old deadlocks. After all, it was only a few years ago that the prospects for peace seemed so much brighter.

I remember when, as Singapore's Trade Minister, I met the Israeli Trade Minister at Davos in the year 2000. He said that he would like to visit me in Singapore with his Palestinian counterpart and, together with me, to take a boat to the Singapore industrial park on a nearby Indonesian island, where he hoped that we could all be received by the Indonesian Trade Minister. I was inspired and immediately worked with my Indonesian counterpart on this project of understanding and goodwill. Unfortunately, within half a year, the intifada began and the cycle of violence became steadily worse. It all seems such a long time ago. However, we must never give up. With goodwill and statesmanship on both sides, and with the support of all of us in the international community, it is possible to re-establish trust and to start again.

Moreover, the international community should not allow the deteriorating relationship across the Taiwan Straits to spin out of control. The push towards independence by certain groups on Taiwan is most dangerous, because it will lead to war with mainland China and will drag in other countries. The stability of the entire Asia-Pacific region is at stake. Not many years ago, the relationship between the mainland and Taiwan was much better. In 1991, Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) — a grouping of economies around the Pacific Ocean — admitted China, Taiwan and Hong Kong on the basis of certain agreed principles. At an APEC meeting in 1992, I remember joining the Trade Ministers of China, Taiwan and Hong Kong for a relaxed lunch in Bangkok. Later, in 1993, representatives from China and Taiwan met in Singapore for informal talks, with both sides acknowledging, "One China: to each its own interpretation".

All problems seemed soluble then. But, in 1994, Taiwanese President Lee Teng-hui gave a shocking interview to a Japanese magazine, describing himself as a Moses leading his people out of Egypt. From then on, cross-straits relations went from bad to worse as pro-independence forces on Taiwan became increasingly adventurous. As in the Middle East, the international community has a strong vested interest in supporting a peaceful resolution of cross-straits conflict, based on the "one China" position that was adopted and settled by the United Nations in 1971.

Even when the United Nations has no legal authority to enforce its wishes, its views carry moral weight. This legitimacy of the Organization is derived from its broad membership, its transparent processes and the active participation of Member States. It is important that the Security Council — which has the power to adopt resolutions binding on all United Nations Member States — be reformed and enlarged so as to reflect the reality of the current international environment.

We need rules that enable us to make decisions and to express our collective judgement of right and wrong, and those rules must evolve in response to new challenges. However, we cannot expect unanimity of views on all matters. Human society is changing all the time. New scientific discoveries present new challenges, to which different societies must respond differently. On matters of religious belief, for example, no one should expect convergence. Our disagreements over issues like the death penalty, abortion, the nature of democracy, gay rights, animal rights and therapeutic cloning are, in a sense, inevitable and necessary.

What we profoundly need is respect for plurality in the world — respect built on the common substrate that defines us as civilized human beings in the twenty-first century. In the nineteenth century, slavery was abolished. In the twentieth century, gender equality became the norm. In this century, we must add more layers to what we share in common. And, upon that shared substrate, we should not only accept diversity, but encourage it. Indeed, as with biological diversity, it is essential for human progress that there should be cultural and political diversity in the world. Without such diversity, our ability to respond to new challenges will be weakened.

For all their imperfections, the United Nations and the World Trade Organization (WTO) represent this diversity in unity. At the WTO, the process of multilateral trade negotiations — however complicated and arduous they may be — is still a more civilized method of resolving conflicts and harmonizing national differences than erecting protectionist walls and fighting trade wars.

Respecting plurality does not mean that we stop recognizing strengths and weaknesses; that would be hypocrisy. Some cultural values are more suited than others to modern times. Some economic systems are more productive. Some political systems are better able to mobilize the creative energies of their people. But none of us should force our views on others. We should never impose a particular political or economic system on societies with different histories and traditions. What we need instead is an environment that encourages mutual learning and healthy competition. For that, we need to respect one another.

As is recognized in the Millennium Development Goals, there is no one-size-fits-all solution to the challenge of human development. When Singapore became independent in 1965, there was no ready solution that fitted us; we had to seek our own way forward. Many countries helped us with aid and advice, and we remain grateful to them. The United Nations Development Programme provided valuable assistance. With no natural resources, we had to organize ourselves in a practical way, add value and be of service to others. Little by little, we worked out pragmatic solutions to our problems. Good governance was a precondition for all our efforts. We were tough on corruption and crime.

When, in the 1970s, we witnessed attempts by international drug dealers to target young Singaporeans, our Parliament adopted draconian laws. We were criticized by some of our friends in the Western media, but we persisted, with the support of the majority of Singaporeans, always acting with their consent and in their interests. Now that we have reached a reasonable standard of economic development, other developing countries have approached us for assistance. We feel honoured to be asked. But we prefer them to see Singapore more as an ongoing experiment to be studied than as a model to follow. Every country is different, and each must customize its own solutions.

Small countries like Singapore need a stable external environment. We are ardent supporters of international organizations like the United Nations and the WTO, because they give us, together with other countries, a say in global governance. A world in which countries big and small can resolve disputes according to commonly agreed rules is infinitely preferable to one in which might makes right.

More than four centuries ago, a wise man from the West visited the East. The Italian Jesuit Matteo Ricci went to China with the goal of converting China to Catholicism. He had a deep respect for the civilization that he wanted to Christianize. Realizing that the only way to impress the Chinese was to interact with them on their own terms, he proceeded to study the Chinese language, to master the Chinese classics and to employ Chinese philosophical concepts in his discourses on Christianity. Instead of talking at the Chinese, he talked to them, expressing concepts to which they could relate. Although Matteo Ricci did not succeed in converting the Chinese, he left behind a lasting legacy, and when he died the Chinese Emperor consented to his burial in China. His tomb, inscribed with his Chinese name, is to be found today in the compound of the Party School of the Beijing Municipal Committee.

History is unending. We need wise men like Matteo Ricci from the West and the East, from the South and the North, to help us, through debate and dialogue, prevent a clash of civilizations. Respecting diversity should never reduce us to hypocrisy and cultural relativism, as if all points of view are equally valid. We should never stop trying to influence one another. Here in the United Nations we are always trying to influence one another, but we must always be prepared to see the same issues from the perspectives of others. Here in the United Nations, we have an institution that can help us create this better world.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Kamal Kharrazi, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Mr. Kharrazi (Islamic Republic of Iran) (*spoke in Farsi; English text provided by the delegation*): An overall and realistic review of the current developments in international relations reveals that our world today faces the formidable challenge of extremism.

Extremism has two distinct and yet interconnected faces: the violence and terrorism of non-State actors and the unbridled militarism of States. The former leads to increasing insecurity and the latter to increasing lawlessness. Insecurity is manifested in horrendous acts of extreme violence and terrorism, whether it is in Iraq, Afghanistan or Russia. Lawlessness is manifested in acting outside of international law and the United Nations Charter and relying on the glorification of force and the blatant use of military might. Lawless militarism of the powerful has given rise to increasing violence and terrorism and is also marketed as their panacea. We must be relentless against the former in a truly collective and all-inclusive manner, and we will muster the courage and national discipline to guard against the latter and remain within the confines of international law.

The increasing insecurity and escalation of acts of violence and terrorism in different parts of the world are a matter of serious concern to all of us. The recent tragic incidents in Iraq, in the school in Beslan in the Russian Federation's North Ossetia, and State terrorism in occupied Palestine have shocked and outraged all peoples worldwide. No rationale can justify the killing of children and the innocent.

As terrorism has become an international challenge, an effective fight against it requires a global approach based on collective cooperation under the provisions of the United Nations Charter as well as the principles of international law. We must rise above business-as-usual politics and avoid discrimination, double standards and selectivity in our approach to fighting this global menace. As a victim of terrorism, the Islamic Republic of Iran strongly condemns terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, and we have demonstrated our strong commitment to fighting terrorism by the arrest and handover of the greatest number of Al Qaeda members apprehended by any single State to date. Our commitment fighting terrorism is unwavering. However, the prevailing international approach, which is primarily a law and order approach, is clearly failing to curb terrorism. We need to revisit our premises and try to develop a genuinely collective, inclusive, well-rounded and multidisciplinary approach, if we are serious about this fight. No State can even come close to doing it alone.

The increasing lawless militarism, the second face of the challenge we encounter, is the use of brute and unsanctioned military force to achieve some political goals, albeit desirable goals. A clear example of this lawlessness is the attack against Iraq. The attack against Iraq was illegal. I wish to thank our distinguished Secretary-General for making this statement a few days ego and courageously defending the Charter of the United Nations and the rule of law. If we, in this body, do not collectively defend the rule of law, we have helped to send the United Nations Charter to oblivion, thereby serving domination and militarism.

We in Iran benefited greatly by the removal of Saddam Hussein. Many in Iran are joyous to see the murderer of their sons behind bars. However, as a matter of principle, and as a principle of the United Nations Charter, this cannot be regarded as anything but the fruit of the forbidden tree. The international community has demonstrated that it will not celebrate achieving this desirable goal through the illegal means of glorifying military power and rushing to use force without the approval of the United Nations.

The increasing lawlessness of States constitutes even a greater danger to our security. It undermines our collective ability to contain terrorism and violence. It offsets our efforts to promote justice, equality, freedom, dignity and prosperity for all, because, if continued, it will lower everyone's quality of life and devalue our humanity. The prevailing world realities illustrate that unbridled militarism and blind terrorism are mutually reinforcing. The international community must work together to find a way to liberate itself from this vicious cycle.

In this context, one particular area that requires resolute action by the international community is the existence and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. As the only victim of the unbridled use of these weapons in recent years, Iran feels very strongly about the absolute imperative of a collective and rule-based multilateral campaign to eradicate all such weapons and to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons as an interim measure. This must be done by the universal application of disarmament and non-proliferation instruments in a comprehensive and non-discriminatory manner. The relevant multilateral instruments must become truly universal and the rights and obligations of all must be scrupulously enforced. Access to technology for peaceful purposes is the only true incentive for the universality of those instruments. At the same time, the legitimate disarmament and non-proliferation concerns of the international community must be addressed through transparency and the vigorous application of monitoring mechanisms. Iran has always been prepared to contribute actively to that global effort. While we insist on our right to technology for peaceful purposes, we have left — and will leave — no stone unturned in order to provide assurances of our peaceful intentions.

Iran has been in the forefront of efforts to establish a zone free from weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East. This initiative, which has received the repeated approval of this Assembly and the Security Council, has been systematically obstructed by Israel's intransigence and its rejection — regrettably, with impunity — of all multilateral instruments. All countries of the region and beyond are unanimous in considering the Israeli arsenal, including its weapons of mass destruction, combined with its policy and record of aggression and State terrorism, as the single greatest threat to regional and global peace and security. Israel cannot hide these facts behind smoke screens. It is time for the international community to show its resolve to maintain the credibility of multilateral disarmament instruments by taking action to compel Israel to comply.

Next year will mark the sixtieth anniversary of the entry into force of the United Nations Charter. The next General Assembly will receive the report of the High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change. Now in the final stages of preparing its report, the Panel would be well-advised to go beyond the generally advertised perceptions of threats and challenges, and to address the more fundamental malady of our age — that is, violence and the glorification of military might. Obviously, the prescription that the Panel will provide will very much depend on its own perception of threats.

In that context, the paradigm of Dialogue among Civilizations, presented by President Khatami of the Islamic Republic of Iran and warmly received by the international community, continues to provide the only vehicle to help promote mutual understanding and facilitate cooperation among States in the pursuit of peace, tolerance, freedom and prosperity.

In 2005, coinciding with the sixtieth anniversary of the adoption of the United Nations Charter, the implementation of the Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilizations will be reviewed. Based on the international experience gained in the period from 2001 through 2005, such a review can help the international community to further advance that paradigm as a long-term process towards promoting peace, democracy and development — the real principles and objectives of the United Nations Charter.

We condemn all acts of violence and terrorism in Iraq. We stress the need for promoting security and preserving the unity, territorial integrity and political independence of Iraq, promoting democracy through drafting a new constitution, holding free and fair elections as scheduled and accelerating the reconstruction of Iraq, as well as the speedy withdrawal of foreign forces from that country.

We welcomed the formation and supported the operation of the Iraqi transitional government as a positive step towards the restoration of the Iraqi people's sovereignty. We emphasize that the United Nations has a pivotal role to play and substantial responsibilities to discharge in the transitional period.

We also welcome the position of the United Nations Secretary-General on the important role that the neighbouring countries to Iraq can play in the restoration of peace and stability in Iraq and in its reconstruction.

In the Palestinian lands, the world is witnessing, with much regret and concern, the continued gross violation of human rights and the Israeli policy of occupation and repression against the oppressed Palestinian people.

A durable peace in Palestine will only be possible if it is based on justice and guarantees an end to the occupation of the Palestinian lands, restoration of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, return of the people of the Palestinian diaspora to their homeland, participation of all in a democratic process and the establishment of a Palestinian State with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital.

We are of the view that the enlightened Palestinian people are capable of independently deciding their political and social affairs and we respect their free decisions on the future of Palestine.

We welcome the valuable efforts by the Government of Afghanistan to consolidate peace, security and stability in the country. In addition, holding fair and free presidential and legislative elections and establishing a broad-based representative and multi-ethnic government, will be vital steps in the process of democratization and reconstruction in Afghanistan.

Realization of the Millennium Development Goals is inseparable from viable international peace and security. Otherwise the political, social, economic and cultural problems of our world will continue to increase cumulatively, leaving us in a more desperate situation. In our view, the only option available to us is to foster closer international cooperation under internationally recognized rules and instruments in the light of dialogue, justice and democracy.

The meeting rose at 9.10 p.m.